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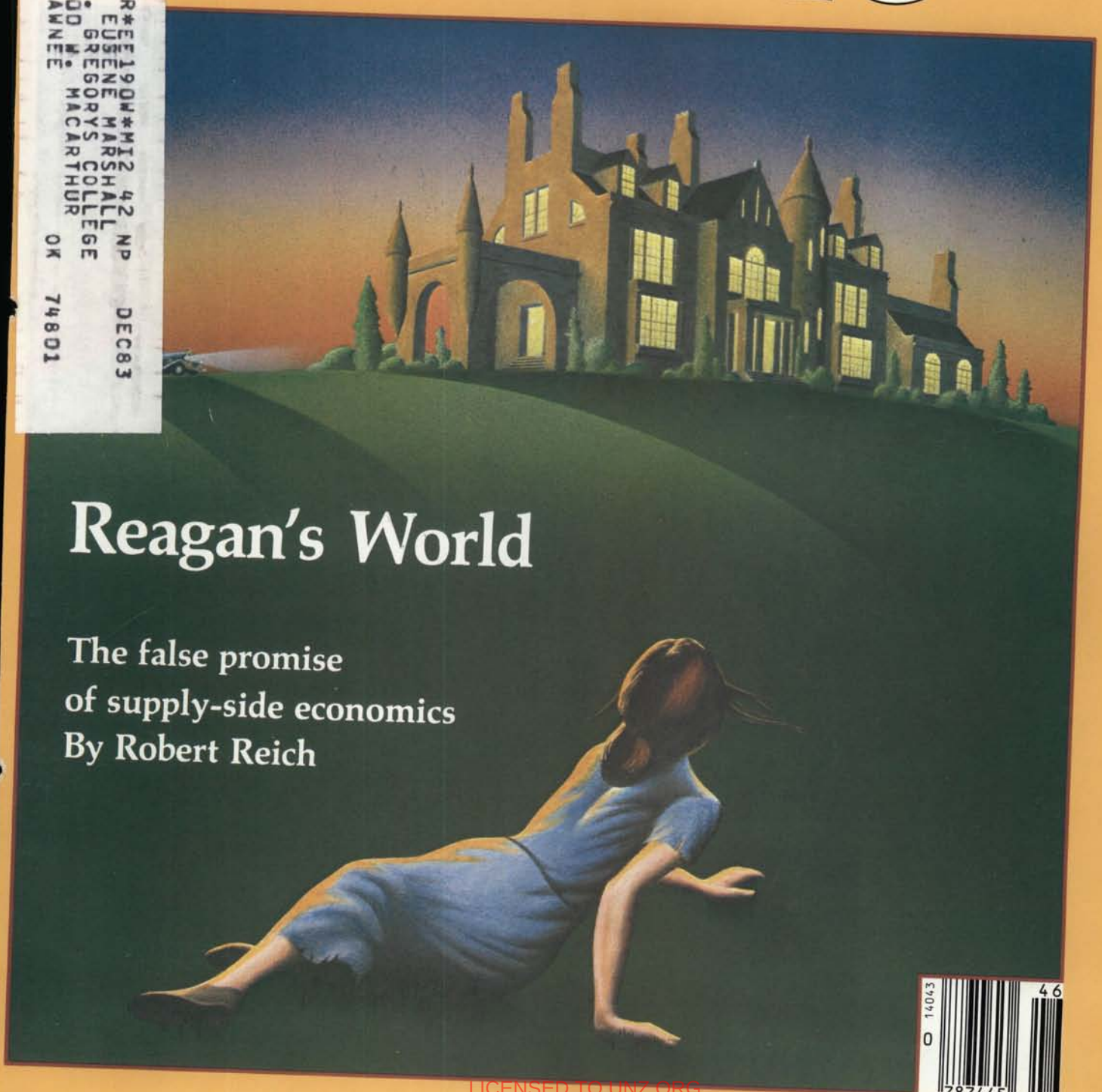

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## FROM WASHINGTON

### Political Playground

I went over to the Horace Mann School the other day to vote, and noticed that Jason, Maggie, and David all had their names on the Happy Birthday Bulletin Board, and that Christopher was being congratulated for a new baby brother. The tots in kindergarten chairs behind the glass doors of the polling place of Ward 3, Precinct 10, on Election Day looked out at us as we shambled past with as much awe as we looked in at them, each group hoping that it was behaving properly. It was the day Jack Anderson's column reported that Secretary of State Alexander Haig had telephoned him twice, urgently, denying that Reagan had lost confidence in him and charging that a high White House aide had been conducting a "guerrilla campaign" to topple him. Reagan called Anderson, too. Haig had his complete confidence, he said.

Well, this business of democratic self-government is a funny thing. There Reagan was, outraged at charges of bickering within his Cabinet, and there I was, outraged at Tuition Tax Credit Initiative No. 7. Its longer title is "District of Columbia Greater Educational Opportunities through Tax Incentives Initiative of 1981." Does that say "public aid to private and parochial schools"? Of course not. But that was what was proposed. It backed into the explanation cagily, saying the tax was limited to $1,200 per pupil for private school tuition, and that if you didn't have a child you could share up to 50 percent with another taxpayer. What that would do to public schools it didn't say.

That is always the way. I have followed political debates for a lifetime, yet I was more exercised over this local school issue than over the Reagan-Haig performance. My children went to Horace Mann. They loved it. Politics is the sum total of all these global and local issues. A new Administration tries to cut a path through them. The G.O.P. 1980 platform pledged that "Next year, a Republican White House will assist, not sabotage, congressional efforts to enact tuition tax relief into law." Carter, it charged, "led the fight against Republican attempts to make tuition tax credits a reality." But the D.C. tuition tax relief initiative was defeated nine to one, and Reagan has the "social issues" ahead of him: abortion, school prayer, school busing, and the rest. Poor chap. At the moment he has his hands full with other matters. Phase III of the Administration has started.

Phase I was the honeymoon. Phase II tested out the Kemp-Roth supply-side miracle cure, and it hasn't worked. Now comes Phase III, and it's tougher. Reagan faces runaway budget deficits plus recession, and Congress could panic if unemployment passes eight and a half percent, or a big bank or business goes bankrupt. Foreign problems increase too. The Awacs victory was too close for elation, and the Al Haig-Jack Anderson caper shows the stress inside the White House. Some ask if the Administration is unraveling. No—not yet, anyway. But we are reminded how hard it is to govern the U.S. with a system that scatters responsibility all over the lot, and it has shown some unexpected traits of the new Administration.

President Reagan has been more right-of-center than generally expected. The pro-business tax cuts were so large, economist Lester Thurow says, that they practically eliminate the American corporate income tax. Toughness toward the Soviets and absence of disarmament negotiations have unsettled our allies. At home, appointment of agency chiefs who disagree with the laws they are supposed to enforce is standard practice. Gigantic business mergers are routine. Big business appeared after the Civil War and practically ran the country (with the exception of the Teddy Roosevelt Administration and the first term of Wilson) until F.D.R.'s day. The New Deal seemed to have changed the trend for good, bringing government back from Wall Street to Washington with regulatory agencies like the Federal Trade and Securities and Exchange Commissions. But now corporations are moving into public disputes through advertising and political action committees. Government bails out Chrysler and throws a rope to the distressed nuclear power industry,

*continued on page 39*

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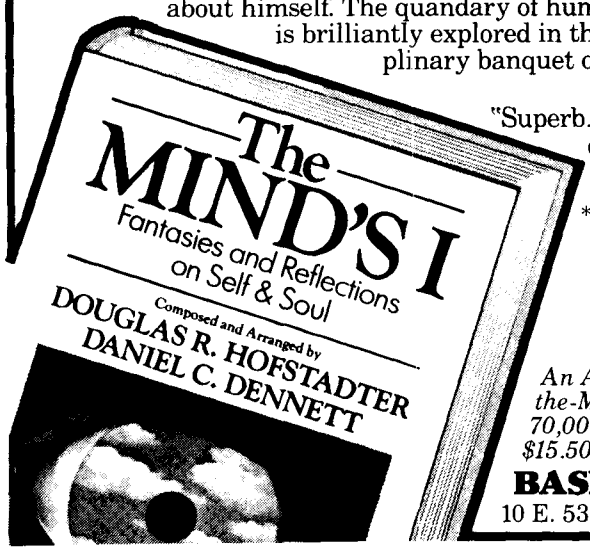


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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 18, 1981

# REAGAN'S DESERT MIRAGE

Less than 24 hours after the Senate vote approving the Awacs sale, Saudi Arabia raised the price of its oil from $32 to $34 a barrel. Less than 24 hours after that, as a way of keeping the new price up, it announced a cutback in production of a million barrels a day. The Reagan Administration then hailed these moves for achieving "stability" and "unity" in the oil markets. But when "stability" means keeping oil prices from dropping in response to declining demand, and "unity" means keeping oil producers from underselling each other, these good-sounding things are good only for the oil cartel, not for those who buy oil—the United States, for instance. For an American Secretary of State to praise a price hike and production cutback as "an important achievement" typifies the "inexhaustible obsequiousness" (to use George Will's term) that now marks the Administration's attitude toward Saudi Arabia.

It is this attitude that now represents the greatest danger of the Awacs deal. During Senate debates on the sale, the Administration argued that Awacs were needed to defend the oil fields from foreign attack. Yet within hours of the deal, the Administration began sending signals that the sale represents not just a military transaction but the beginning of a new American policy in the Middle East—a policy which makes Saudi Arabia the linchpin of U.S. interests in the area, and Saudi sensibilities the prism through which the U.S. will perceive those interests. The result is not simply a tilt toward the Saudis, as many have noted, but the first step in the Saudization of American Middle East policy. It is also a prescription for disaster. For the U.S. to adopt the Saudi view of the two central problems in the Middle East—defense of the Persian Gulf and a resolution of the Arab-Israel dispute—is for the U.S. to abandon its own interests.

In policing the Gulf, the Administration has resuscitated the Nixon doctrine, with Crown Prince Fahd playing the role of the Shah. But Saudi Arabia is a poor substitute for Iran. Saudi Arabia is an economic asset but it is not a strategic partner. It has too little manpower, too unreliable a military, too large and radical an alien work force, and too much fundamentalist unrest to bear the weight of American interests in preventing Soviet encroachment in the Persian Gulf. In any case, Saudi Arabia is unwilling, as well as unable, to do so. Saudi policy in the Gulf has consistently called for *both* superpowers to keep hands off. It has denied the U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia and pressured its smaller neighbors like Oman to do the same. In fact, the transfer of Awacs to Saudi control will effectively eliminate the single de facto operating U.S. base in the Gulf: the four U.S.-controlled Awacs now patrolling the area. Nevertheless, the Administration nurtures the illusion that huge Saudi arms purchases safeguard America's strategic position in the Gulf. Senator John Glenn of Ohio, among others, has repeatedly pointed out that B-52 bombing fly-ins, rapid deployment force

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charades with Egypt, and talk of stockpiling Band-Aids in the Negev all make for good show; but the only nonbluff U.S. military force in the region is the Indian Ocean Naval Task Force. The Administration is now cutting that in half, believing that the slack will be taken up by the Saudis.

If fascination with the Saudis has led President Reagan to an imprudent overreliance on their power and good will to promote U.S. interests in the Gulf, it is leading him down an even more dangerous path regarding the second major U.S. stake in the area: the Camp David accords. The Reagan Administration had until very recently shown little interest in Camp David, not only because of the part Jimmy Carter played in its achievement, but also because it considers regional disputes to be distractions from the really important East-West business of foreign policy. Both the Egyptians and the Israelis have been dismayed by the low level of U.S. representation at the autonomy talks. Instead, Secretary of State Alexander Haig has been pursuing his "strategic consensus," which means, in practice, a new American alignment—however chimerical—with Saudi Arabia. The cost of this relationship keeps growing as the Saudis produce one litmus test after another for American good will. First came Awacs. And now the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Saudis are opposed to Camp David, though they are willing to let it run its course—up until the time in April 1982 when Israel relinquishes the remaining third of the Sinai that it now holds. The state-controlled Jidda newspaper *Al Madina Al Munawara* put it this way: "We cannot and must not expect President Hosni Mubarak to abrogate the Camp David agreements at this time for a number of reasons that are understood by those acquainted with international tradition." Living up to a peace treaty only so long as the other party is giving up territory, and then abrogating that treaty as soon as the other side has fully lived up to its commitments, sounds more like conventional duplicity than "international tradition." No matter. It is the Saudi view. It is also a view being pressed upon President Mubarak, who says no new peace initiatives should replace Camp David—at least "not now." But it is not the view one would expect from the U.S.—a "full partner," signatory and guarantor of the Camp David accords. And yet within hours of its Awacs victory, the Administration subtly shifted ground on Camp David, speaking in Saudi-like tones of its importance as a stage. Camp David has taken us far, said national security adviser Richard Allen, implying that something else will be needed to take us farther. A "senior American official" was less subtle. He reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to Camp David in ritual terms ("I want to emphasize with the greatest clarity that the United States is committed to the Camp David process and the Camp David agreement"). He then added, "That is America's policy at this juncture in our Middle Eastern game plan."

For those wondering what waits at the next juncture in the Middle East game plan, the Administration, soon after the Awacs vote, pointed the way. An eight-point peace plan, floated months ago by Crown Prince Fahd and dismissed by both President Sadat and the State Department as simply a restatement of old Saudi positions, was suddenly found by the Administration to contain "interesting elements." State Department spokesman Dean Fischer pointed to one of these elements: Israel, he said, is twice mentioned by name. Indeed it is. In fact, Israel is named three times: in demands for an end to Israeli occupation of Arab lands, an end to Israeli settlements, and an end to "Israeli arrogance, of which Menachem Begin represents its ugliest picture," whatever that means. Israel is men-

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THINK... AFTER THEY GOT YOU IN TO THE OVAL OFFICE, DID REAGAN GET YOU TO SIGN ANYTHING?..

DRAWING BY MIKE PETERS



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# CORRESPONDENCE

## WRITER'S CRAMP

*To the editors:*

The apparent overcondensing of my remarks in Richard Grenier's report from the Writers' Congress ("Writer's Bloc," TNR, November 4) has resulted in the inadvertent distortion of my language and of my meaning. It was not the Writers' Congress that I found disappointing but only its *political* rhetoric. In the past, I have both helped to organize and attended several such congresses. It is not a writers' union that I fear—I belong to and financially support several writers' unions and organizations—but a *politically* exploited writers' union, which, in my view, would merely compound the already difficult plight of American writers.

*Jerzy Kosinski, past president*
*P.E.N. American Center*
*New York, New York*

## HONORING SADAT

*To the editors:*

It was sad to see THE NEW REPUBLIC turn an editorial ostensibly honoring the late Anwar Sadat into a platform to blast Saudi Arabia and praise Israel ("Anwar Sadat's Legacy," TNR, October 21). Americans praised Sadat, belatedly, when his actions coincided with what we and the Israelis wanted. Sadat repeatedly told us there will never be peace in the Middle East until the Palestinian issue is recognized and addressed. No one in the U.S. or Israel has yet had the vision or courage to match Sadat's move. If we now honor his memory, we should—finally—listen to what he told us.

*Bernice L. Youtz*
*Olympia, Washington*

*To the editors:*

In your editorial "Anwar Sadat's Legacy," I think you omitted an important phrase. After "As Henry Kissinger pointed out, for the Soviets to disclaim responsibility for the assassination [of Sadat] just because they didn't give the final order would be like starting an avalanche and disclaiming responsibility for any deaths by arguing that the stones that killed the victims were not the ones used to start the process," you should have added: "and like the United States disclaiming responsibility for the overthrow and death of the legally elected Allende in Chile."

*Adèle Taylor*
*Oberlin, Ohio*

## DISTORTED HISTORY

*To the editors:*

The many inaccurate and misleading assertions made by Barry Rubin ("Turkey's Military Interlude," TNR, October 7) once again demonstrate how the lack of accurate historical accounts distorts our understanding of the present.

If, as Rubin asserts, " . . . electoral politics, civil liberties, a moderate and nonaggressive nationalism . . . " were the byproducts of the military establishment, then why is there so much religious and cultural persecution of minorities (what's left of them) such as Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Kurds, and Assyrians? Why are Armenians obliged to pay extra taxes? Why can't Armenian churches be built or old ones renovated? Why are Armenians forced to change their last names to Turkish surnames? Why is the Armenian Patriarch under virtual house arrest? Why can't Armenian schools hire Armenian teachers or teach the Armenian language?

During World War I, " . . . hundreds of thousands of Armenians . . . " were not massacred. The number is actually more than one and a half million Armenians, or over half the entire population. Is it any wonder that after 60 years of broken promises, broken treaties, and empty lip service, Armenians have put down their pens and picked up their guns? One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.

*Krikos Naccachian*
*Silverado, California*

*Barry Rubin replies:*

Despite my very strong sympathy for Armenian rights and sufferings, I find Mr. Naccachian's letter full of inaccurate and misleading assertions. Minorities do not pay extra taxes, their last names are not forcibly changed, and the Patriarch is not under house arrest. By law, Turkish is the principal language of instruction in all schools, but Armenian teachers teach their language as a subject in Armenian schools. The cold-blooded murderers of Turkish diplomats are terrorists and they have no popular base of support among Armenians. Available indications are that these shadowy groups are largely surrogates for those seeking to destabilize Turkey—they never criticize, for example, the U.S.S.R.'s oppression of Armenians.

## REPUBLICAN 'FEMINISM'

*To the editors:*

Congratulations on your excellent editorial "Reagan's Women" (TNR, October 28). It is the best I have seen explaining why women are frightened by Reagan. One mistake should be corrected, however. It was not the League of Women Voters but the National Woman's Party under Alice Paul that first proposed the equal rights amendment.

*Martha Ragland*
*Nashville, Tennessee*

*To the editors:*

Regarding your editorial "Reagan's Women," it is essential to be aware that whatever the President may say about his commitment to women's equality, his Administration is being run by men committed to George Gilder's philosophy as embodied in Gilder's viciously anti-feminist book, *Wealth and Poverty*. Some of Gilder's more piquant notions about women in the work force are: "Equal pay for equal work is an idea that applies nowhere"; "there is little evidence that black women suffer any discrimination"; and women are "amply credentialed but in need of federal lawyers to make up for a wholly commendable lack of careerist drive and aggressiveness."

The men who have made *Wealth and Poverty* the road map for American policy know nothing of the issues affecting women today. When we evaluate what they have done to women in the first nine months of this Administration, it becomes clear that we are dealing not merely with a policy of malign neglect, but of a policy grounded in a basic disbelief in women's rights or ability to participate in our society as full equals.

*Lynn Hecht Schafran*
*Commission on the Status of Women*
*New York, New York*

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tioned, but only as the perpetrator of some illegal, illegitimate, or noxious activity.

Mr. Fischer and Mr. Haig think that the Fahd plan implicitly recognizes Israel's right to exist. They are wrong. The one clause that speaks of "the right of states in the region to live in peace" quite conspicuously fails to mention Israel. The only state whose right to exist is mentioned by name is "the independent State of Palestine with its capital, East Jerusalem." The boundaries of this independent state of Palestine are nowhere described. But in an explanatory interview on November 2, Prince Fahd stated that he was calling for returning the Palestinians to their homeland in what is now Israel, and for a "P.L.O.-governed state with Jerusalem as its capital." Fahd is thus correct in saying that his plan is not an innovation. It is simply a restatement of the traditional maximalist Arab demands on Israel. In the words of the Secretary-General of the Arab League, "There is not one word in Prince Fahd's plan indicating that Saudi Arabia or any Arab party is ready to recognize Israel."

The plan resurrects the elements of the most intransigent Arab positions. First, total Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied in 1967—which would leave Israel essentially defenseless, a country with an eight-mile waist waiting to be cut in two, with all its population centers within range of enemy artillery, and with Arab armies (whose tank force is as large as NATO's) looming overhead on the strategic heights of the Golan and the West Bank. Second, the re-partition of Jerusalem—as much of a demographic and geopolitical impossibility as having a barbed-wire international frontier zigzagging through the streets of Washington. Third, establishment of a P.L.O. state—a prescription for permanent war, to be ended only by Israel's agreeing to national suicide, since that would be the result of the return of all refugees to Israel proper.

Besides its eight points, the Fahd plan includes three "conditions." One of them is that "the United States should cease its unlimited support of Israel." This directive ought logically to sit badly with an American President who declares that no nation will be permitted to dictate the foreign policy of the United States. Yet Mr. Reagan welcomed the plan, because, he said, it "recognized Israel as a nation to be negotiated with." Has the President been oversleeping? The plan conspicuously omits any mention of the idea of negotiation. It also contains nothing that any Israeli government could regard as negotiable. This plan is not an extension of Camp David, nor can it be a successor. It is a contradiction of Camp David. Prince Fahd, at least, had the candor to say so, describing his plan as "categorically different" from, and a replacement for, Camp David. Camp David is bringing peace to its signatories because it embodies the principles of recognition and negotiation. And it provides for gradual movement toward settlement while psychological barriers (which Anwar Sadat called 80 percent of the problem) are eroded through a transitional period of autonomy. Camp David is a visionary approach because it recognizes that some disputes over territory—like the West Bank—are so intractable that assignment of sovereignty cannot guarantee peace. Real peace requires a kind of shared sovereignty: an open, evolving, political coexistence between two peoples in the same land. In contrast, the Fahd plan is the old pre-Camp David call for an imposed solution with no negotiations and no guarantee even of Israel's right to exist within the 1949 borders. If this is what Israel has to look forward to on the day it gives up the last piece of the Sinai, then Israel—and Camp David—have been betrayed.

SECRETARY Haig further diluted Camp David when, the day after the Awacs vote, he declared: "In the period ahead we are going to have to continue to work and work with increasing intensity to achieve national reconciliation in Lebanon because that situation is itself now intimately engaged in the peace process—the Camp David accords." What has national reconciliation in Lebanon to do with Camp David? What does Camp David have to say about the internecine warfare between Christians and Moslems in Lebanon? Again, this statement becomes intelligible only if seen from the Saudi point of view. The Saudis helped arrange a cease-fire between Israel and the P.L.O. several months ago in southern Lebanon. To speak of Lebanon as now being part of Camp David is to reaffirm President Reagan's call for a Saudi-mediated introduction of the P.L.O. into peace talks (see "Disastrous Diplomacy," TNR, November 11). This is a sure way to halt the peace process. Israel demonstrated at Camp David that it will negotiate—and settle—with an enemy if the problem between them is borders or the other traditional objects of international dispute. But it will not negotiate with anyone if the principal object of dispute is Israel's existence.

If the P.L.O. ever truly recognizes Israel's right to exist, then and only then would it make sense to talk about negotiating with the P.L.O. That recognition cannot consist of a P.L.O. functionary's whispering the word "Israel" to a newsmagazine stringer in the bar of the Beirut Hilton; it would have to be formal, explicit, and wholehearted, as was Sadat's. But the Reagan Administration is making a grave error by counting on such a recognition, because for the P.L.O. to recognize Israel it would have to cease to be the

COMING

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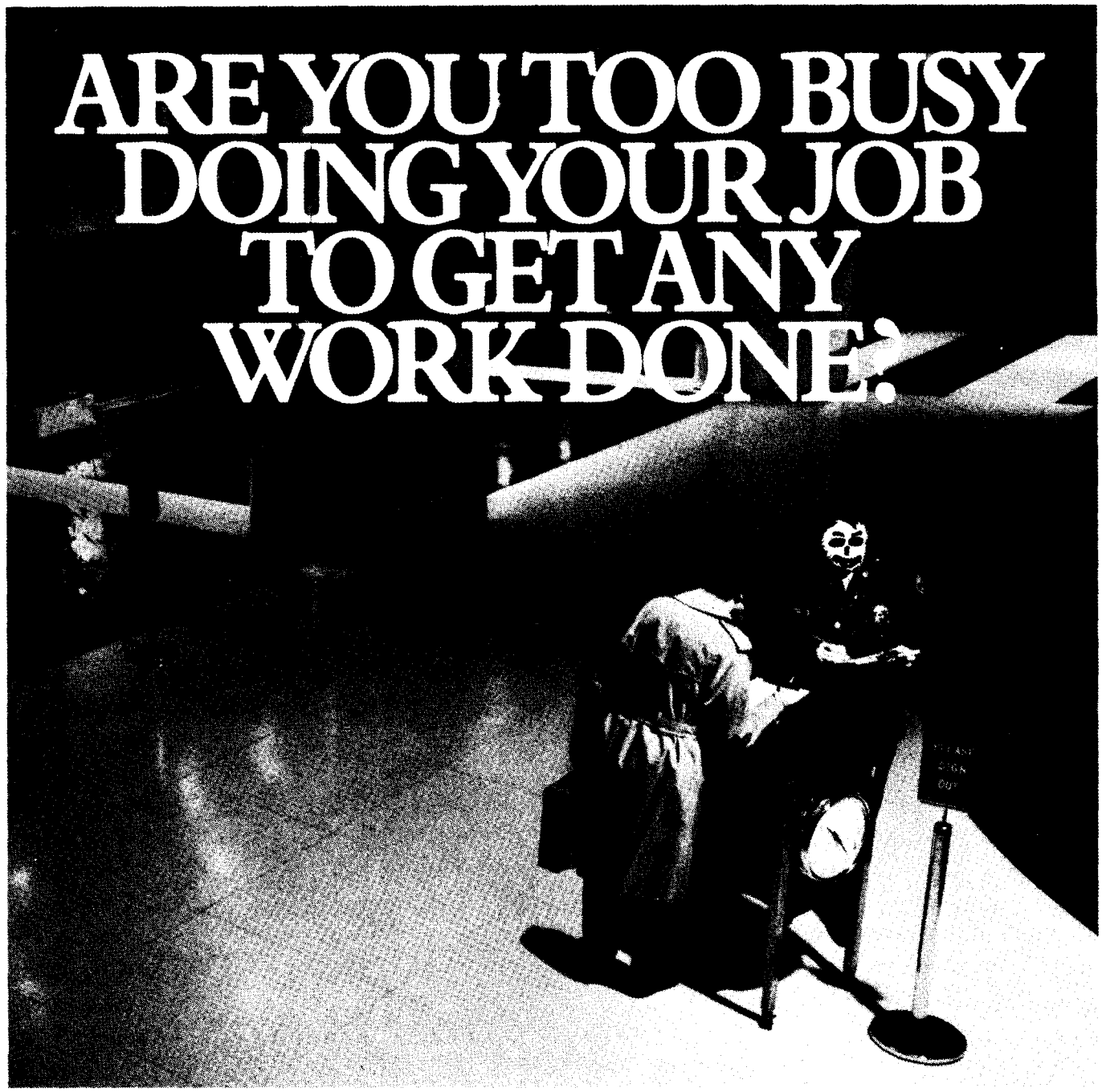

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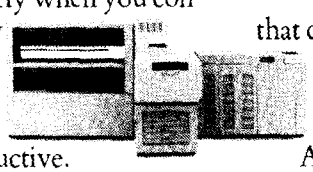

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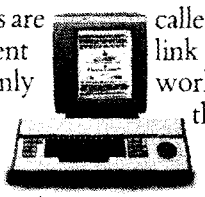

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P.L.O. Its entire ideology is based on the principle of return of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and elsewhere to Israel proper. For the P.L.O. to renounce it would be to admit that the Israel-Arab dispute could be solved like other post-World War II nation-carving conflicts, like that between India and Pakistan, by resettling refugees from both sides among their coreligionists. It would be to transfer the existing Israeli-Arab dispute back into the original Camp David context—a dispute between Israel and West Bank Palestinians over the nature of the political entity under which the West Bank Palestinians will live. That was the original intention of Camp David and it provided a plausible solution. Introducing an irredentist P.L.O. into Camp David is a contradiction in terms.

IN THIS context, it is hard to imagine a more counterproductive U.S. policy. Even the implication that Camp David might soon give way to the Fahd plan will thoroughly undercut efforts to expand the Camp David consensus. What possible reason could there be for King Hussein to accept American blandishments to join Camp David if the whole process is soon to be scrapped? What West Bank Palestinian could possibly want to join autonomy talks if he feels that even the United States considers autonomy a dead end? And how can Egypt present anything but unacceptable demands to Israel in the autonomy talks if Egypt feels that it cannot be seen to be demanding less than the United States? For the peace process to move forward, all sides will have to make concessions. The signals the Administration is sending now will stop all negotiations dead in their tracks. All the Arab parties will have had the ground cut out from under them.

And Israel will be shown, once again, that when it makes concessions in return for security guarantees, it is making a bad bargain. Israeli experience with American commitments is not a happy one. In 1978, the U.S. pledged not to equip Saudi F-15s with offensive add-ons that would enable them to strike Israel; that pledge has now been abrogated. The Camp David peace treaty, for which Israel agreed to give up the Sinai, speaks of Palestinian autonomy but not of the P.L.O., a Palestinian state, or the re-partitioning of Jerusalem; all of these have resurfaced now in the form of the Fahd plan. Just before the Senate vote on the Awacs package, President Reagan sent a letter to the Senate which assured that the Awacs sale would not be completed unless the Saudis gave certain guarantees regarding the security of the equipment and were helpful in achieving peace in the area; but after the vote, White House chief of staff James Baker announced that he could see no circumstances under which the Awacs sale would be held up. In 1975, Israel made its first withdrawal in the Sinai as part of the Kissinger disengagement agreements in return for a U.S. promise not to recognize the P.L.O. unless it recognized Israel's right to exist and renounced terrorism. The frantic signals being sent by the Administration to the P.L.O. now demonstrate the fragility of this commitment too.

Unless this pattern of American policy is quickly reversed, even Israel's Labor doves will soon be calling for a freeze on all withdrawals and further concessions until Israel is given guarantees it can trust that U.S. commitments will not be "reassessed" just as the last Israeli soldier is leaving the Sinai. And they will be perfectly justified in doing so.

Camp David holds out the hope, slender though it may be, that over a period of time marked by peace between Egypt and Israel and the development of autonomy arrangements for the West Bank Palestinians, a gradual change in attitudes on all sides might occur that could open the way for a wider peace. This is far from a certainty. But if Camp David offers no guarantee of a wider peace, the Fahd plan offers no possibility of it—because it is merely a list of demands that Israel cannot possibly consider. Therefore it closes off the only avenue to peace, and, at the same time, opens up the possibility that the real gains already made under Camp David will be lost. The leaders of Israel, unlike the tormented Senator William Cohen of Maine, will not act against what they know to be their country's interests out of fear of stirring up anti-Jewish prejudice. That has been Israel's revolutionary message since its founding 33 years ago. It is a message bound to irritate those who like Jews as long as they are historical victims and not actors. It is a message this Administration must learn before it destroys whatever chances for peace still exist in the Middle East.

A Surgeon General without an army.

# KOOP D'ETAT

AT AGE 65 most people slip into obscurity with a retirement check and some golf clubs. But Dr. C. Everett Koop, a world-renowned pediatric surgeon, is on the brink of a new career. On October 28, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee approved Koop's nomination as Surgeon General of the United States. Despite a request by Senator Charles McC. Mathias, Republican of Maryland, that the full Senate postpone its vote to allow time for further research into the candidate's background, the nomination is expected to go through. The appointment is a controversial one. Dozens of newspapers and national organizations oppose Koop on the basis of his doctrinaire anti-abortion stance, his backward views on women's and gays' rights, and particularly his inexperience in the field of public health. Koop's colorful way of expressing his moral convictions has made him


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an easy target for media attacks that ignore more pertinent issues. A fundamentalist Christian, Koop has compared legalized abortion with "the beginnings of the political climate that lead to Auschwitz, Dachau, and Belsen." He has denounced most main-line Christian denominations as "depraved." And he predicted, in a 1979 commencement speech, that 20 years hence the Rockefeller Foundation will be funding homosexual test-tube babies to give the gay movement more political clout. Perhaps he was kidding, but President Reagan isn't. The President is determined to have his man, even if it means making ineffectual the position the Philadelphia surgeon is intended to fill. In an attempt to make two wrongs equal one right, Reagan is placing an unqualified man in a job whose legitimacy is itself increasingly questionable.

THE position of Surgeon General, which slowly evolved from the "supervising surgeon" for the Merchant Marines in 1798 to the nation's chief spokesman for public health issues in the 1920s, has always been nebulous. The power of the office peaked in 1964, when the influential report on the health hazards of cigarette smoking was issued. In 1966, all decision-making functions of the post were transferred to H.E.W.'s office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, and the Surgeon General became more of an advisory figure than an administrator. President Nixon abolished the position in 1973 when, unable to find a candidate, he simply neglected to appoint anybody. President Carter reinstated the position, but combined it with the job of Assistant Secretary for Health. In whatever form, the job has managed to survive as that of the national counselor for public health matters. The three previous Surgeons General all had backgrounds in public health. Dr. William Stewart specialized in epidemiology and public administration in the Public Health Service before his appointment in 1965. His successor, Dr. Jesse Steinfeld, was a scientist and a deputy director of the National Cancer Institute before his nomination in 1969. And Dr. Julius Richmond, who served as both Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary for Health under Carter, had been chairman of Harvard Medical School's department of preventive and social medicine.

Koop, on the other hand, has virtually no experience in the field of public health, the function of which, according to the American Public Health Association, is preventing disease and promoting the health needs of the population as a whole. The A.P.H.A. says that most of Koop's admittedly impressive achievements—including new surgical techniques and the treatment of childhood cancer—are in the field of "patient care," which concentrates on the treatment of illness rather than its prevention. At his confirmation hearing in October, Koop pointed to his experience curing various epidemics and coordinating programs for medical fellowships abroad as public health qualifications. But the A.P.H.A. says that these do not constitute the "specialized training or significant experience in public health programs" required by law for the position of Surgeon General.

When Koop was nominated in September, the main part of the job was supervision of the 6,000-member Commissioned Corps, a medical team that staffs the Public Health Service hospitals and clinics and the Indian reservation health centers. The corps is on hand in case of a national medical emergency such as the eruption of Mount St. Helens. But several weeks ago the government announced it will no longer fund the eight hospitals and 27 clinics. The hospitals, which were originally set up to treat commercial seamen and to keep communicable diseases out of the country, over the past 40 years have gradually become health centers serving low-income communities. According to Health and Human Services Department spokesmen, the Surgeon General's main job, aside from directing the pared-down corps, will be to advise the Administration on policies regarding the elderly, including overseeing the White House Conference on Aging, which will be held at the end of the month.

FOR THIS kind of job, it makes little difference whether or not Koop has the requisite experience in public health. If he did, he would have little opportunity to apply his knowledge. Government health officials acknowledge that the position is most important for symbolic reasons. "The Surgeon General is more tradition than anything else," says Jim Buchan of the Public Health Public Affairs office. "We've had a Surgeon General since the 1700s." But such a cavalier attitude angers some in the field of public health. Dr. William McBeath, executive director of the American Public Health Association, says he would rather have no Surgeon General at all than one who does not have adequate background in public health. "That would be preferable to pulling a travesty on the public, by passing off a leopard as a tiger," he said.

The President's motives in appointing Koop appear to be more those of self-interest than of concern for the public health. The nomination is a way to appease the anti-abortion forces who backed Koop and who opposed the appointment of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Koop's lack of public health qualifications may also help pave the way for further erosion of the already diminished Public Health Service. As for the nominee himself, the title of Surgeon General will provide a pleasant way to keep busy after the mandatory age of retirement. If Koop is to be a mere figurehead, President Reagan should follow his own preachings on the size of government and abolish the position as Nixon did. But if the post is to be a viable one, it should be filled by somebody with the necessary qualifications.

**ELISA ISAACSON**

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The 'white whirlwind' has become a gentle breeze.

# SOUTH AFRICA STALLS

## BY BENJAMIN POGRUND

*Johannesburg*

HOPING for change in South Africa has been in fashion for the past three years, since P. W. Botha became Prime Minister. He created expectations from the start by telling his white electorate, "We must make adaptations, otherwise we will die." He stressed that white survival depended on making changes that would satisfy the aspirations of the majority blacks, Indians, and coloreds. Drawing on his background as Minister of Defense and expressing the views of the army staff, he launched the paramilitary concept of "total strategy"—meant to mobilize the public and private sectors behind the government to resist Marxism and to ensure the advancement of all South Africans. One newspaper headline after another hailed his pragmatic approach as he rapidly set up commissions and committees to examine issues such as the position of blacks in the cities (which raised the possibility that some rights of representation might be granted to them); the consolidation of land in the fragmented black rural reserves, now called "homelands"; preparation of a new constitution to give coloreds and Indians some form of real representation alongside whites; and the desirability of maintaining apartheid in education. Botha also held out the hope of amendment of the Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act, which prohibit interracial marriage and sex. He spoke imaginatively of a "Constellation of States" to bring together all the nations of southern Africa for mutual economic progress.

But Botha's first parliament (composed only of whites, of course) came and went and little was done. It was explained that Botha was still grappling with the aftereffects of the Information Department scandal, South Africa's Watergate; and when the next year's parliament also left hopes unfulfilled, it was explained that Botha was having trouble with his party's right wing. Parliament at the start of this year also did little; early in the session Botha announced a general election for April 30, so there was no time to do anything. (His National Party was reelected, albeit with a slightly reduced majority.) It is now being said that the real legislative push for change will happen next year. At first it appeared that, in order to sidestep the right wing, Botha would undercut apartheid laws through administrative action and not engage in public fights in parliament. But the officials are themselves extremely conservative and are disregarding the instructions of their political masters.

It is precisely at this juncture that the Reagan Administration has presented its long-awaited policy statement on South Africa. Set out by the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, it starts by emphasizing southern Africa's importance to the United States and the West because of the region's strategic location and its possession of critical minerals. It expresses anxiety about the potential for violent conflict in the subcontinent and for the spread of Soviet influence, which would imperil American interests. The U.S. will not "choose between black and white"; will not attempt any "destabilizing" of South Africa; will not align itself with apartheid policies. It will seek "to build a more constructuve relationship" with South Africa, based on "shared interests, persuasion, and improved communication." And America will support proponents of reform and nonviolent change.

Crocker also singled out a Namibian settlement as the key to a successful future in southern Africa (see "Namibia Breakthrough?" by Robert A. Manning, page 16). This point was first reinforced in the invasion of Angola launched by South Africa in late August: Secretary of State Alexander Haig not only refused to criticize South Africa but in a sense defended it by saying that raids into Angola had to be seen in the light of "SWAPO's bloodshed and terrorism against the innocent noncombat inhabitants of Namibia." Adding force to this, the U.S. vetoed a United Nations Security Council motion which would have condemned South Africa alone. And it was primarily Washington's negative response which ended a French initiative to present a diplomatic *démarche* to the South African government protesting the highly publicized maltreatment of black squatters at Nyanga, near Cape Town.

It seems that the Reagan Administration's ruminations about southern Africa have brought it to the same conclusion as the Carter Administration before it: that racial change must come to South Africa. But the road leading to this conclusion is so different that it

Benjamin Pogrund is an editor at the Johannesburg *Rand Daily Mail*.



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# Go, Detroit!

Next time somebody brags about that revolutionary five-cylinder, front-wheel, turbo-charged foreign car he's driving, tell him this: U.S. manufacturers offered five-cylinder engines back in 1906, front-wheel driven automobiles in 1930, and supercharged engines in 1934.

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It pioneered bumpers, electric starters and horns, force-fed lubrication, power steering, four-wheel hydraulic brakes, back-up lamps, gasoline gauges, crank-type and electric windows, all-steel bodies, paints in a wide range of high-gloss colors, safety glass, air cleaners, air conditioners, gasoline and oil filters, easily changeable tires, independent front-wheel suspension, seatbelts, energy absorbing frames, even computers to control engine and vehicle functions.

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It accounts for one-fifth of the country's gross national product and one-sixth of its employment. It transforms more than 20% of this nation's steel output, 60% of its synthetic rubber, 50% of its malleable iron, and 25% of its glass into the cars and trucks that America wants and needs. And it will have invested more than $70 billion by 1985 to give us automobiles that deliver unsurpassed performance, efficiency, and reliability. That ranks as the largest privately funded investment program in history, dwarfing the Alaskan pipeline and even the government's Apollo program.

America's top two corporate spenders on research and development last year were both automotive companies. Their combined R&D outlays approached $4 billion.

The industry is waging an uphill battle against the ravaging effects of a slow economy, high interest rates, a tangle of government regulations, foreign competition, high labor costs, and prices spouting at the pump. Rather than retreat, it's determined to march on.

The X-body was followed this year by the K and the J, the Escort and the Lynx. A phalanx of technological innovations included electronically controlled engines; new applications for plastics, aluminum, high-strength steel, and magnesium; new automotive primers and paints; and new aerodynamic designs.

All this translates into more performance for the buck, more miles per gallon, and more quality and reliability for consumers.

So next time somebody tells you about his foreign make, tell him to get a horse.

Or a pony if he prefers the economy model.

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results in a markedly different approach—which in turn raises questions about the nature of the desired goal. Understandably, the Reagan Administration's policy on southern Africa is set within the framework of its global policy, which means rolling back the Soviet Union's presence and influence wherever possible. The accent is on preserving United States and Western strategic and economic interests. Racial conflict in southern Africa is thus a focus of interest not so much for the human rights concerns which loomed so large for the Carter Administration as for its potential for endangering U.S. interests. The Reagan Administration rejects apartheid, but it will not countenance any actions which could undermine white rule *unless it is certain that a stable government will* replace it. Such an alternative government is not in sight. So the Administration looks for a toning down of apartheid and hopes that change will ripple along quietly. The Carter Administration used condemnation and a lessening of contact to press for change; the Reagan Administration is attempting persuasion and closer contact.

This policy starts with Namibia. Washington's global strategy applied to Africa means reducing, if not eliminating, the presence of the Soviet Union and its surrogates; in Angola the Cuban troops, estimated by the State Department to number between 15,000 and 19,000, must be removed, together with their hundreds of East German and Soviet advisers. In the process, the U.S. can gain the prestige of resolving the Namibian problem, accomplishing what some 35 years of international efforts have failed to do. Any settlement, it is again correctly perceived, hangs on South Africa. Having chosen a "constructive relationship," the Administration believes it must demonstrate its friendship and refrain from expressing any distaste it might feel about what South Africa does, at home or in Namibia.

BUT THE manifest evidence of American good will thus far has aroused only a lukewarm response in South Africa itself. Of course, most blacks, Indians, and coloreds would not respond positively to what they regard as a betrayal of their interests. Even during the Carter Administration, those in the black consciousness movement scorned America as only helping to perpetuate white rule in South Africa; and America under President Reagan is beyond the pale. But the muted response among whites, whose interests are being served by Washington's new stance, is another matter. There is obvious gratification that South Africa's strategic importance is being acknowledged: it confirms what whites have always believed is their due. Beyond this, however, not much more has been heard, other than a mild comment by Botha that relations with the Reagan Administration are better than they were with the Carter people.

One probable reason for the lack of enthusiasm is that white South Africans continue to retain bitter memories of their own 1975 invasion of Angola, which was conducted with the covert connivance of the Ford Administration. South African soldiers were within about ten miles of taking the capital of Luanda when an aroused Congress, at the instigation of then-Senator Dick Clark, Democrat of Iowa, took America out of the action. South Africa was exposed to international condemnation and withdrew. Having been let down so badly, and during a Republican Administration at that, white South Africans now doubt American promises to be a steadfast ally. And there is nervousness that the next Administration might not be as intent as Reagan appears to be upon providing a *"determined U.S. leadership" in southern Africa.*

UNDERNEATH these apprehensions is the question put by a government newspaper in Johannesburg in discussing America's veto of the Security Council motion on the Angola attack: "What, if anything, does the U.S. expect from South Africa as a quid pro quo?" This goes to the heart of the matter: it raises the issue of exactly what change is possible in South Africa. A good deal of misunderstanding persists about this. The first point to note is that Prime Minister Botha has not been the originator of change. The process was begun a decade before him by his predecessor, John Vorster. It was Vorster who broke the racial logjam created by the ideological fervor and rigidity of the previous Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd. Verwoerd had invested crude apartheid with the intellectual gloss of separate development. Vorster retained the ideology but set about introducing changes at its periphery, warning that unless this was done the country would face consequences "too ghastly to contemplate." In his time, sports apartheid was breached; five-star hotels became partly desegregated (racially mixed dancing and swimming were still not allowed); blacks began to get skilled jobs on the state-run railways. These seemingly minor shifts were of fundamental significance in the South African racial context.

By the mid-1970s, however, Vorster had run out of steam. He was tired and ill. And his deviations from Verwoerdian orthodoxies in 1969 led to a break from his National Party and the formation of the Herstigte (Renewed) National Party. That was a heavy burden for Vorster to bear; his Afrikaner soul could not tolerate precipitating yet another split among his people. So when racial change ran into opposition among Afrikaners, Vorster began to back off. Vorster lapsed into inactivity, despite the frantic calls of those inside and outside the Afrikaner camp who urged him to use his father-figure status to push ahead with unpopular measures.

Botha's path since becoming Prime Minister in September 1978 has been strikingly similar, except that he started off at a faster pace than Vorster had been able


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reform can be taken. Since then, Botha has stated forthrightly that he will not split Afrikaners. This means a repeat of the Vorster era: he'll attempt no changes which might alienate large numbers of Afrikaners.

Afrikaners are not open to far-reaching change, which, simply put, would mean an end to racial discrimination and full participation of all South Africans in the country's affairs. They will persevere with separate development to the bitter end, even though some of them have come to recognize the failure and futility of this policy, because they see it as their only means of survival. But they have nothing to put in its place, and they will cling to it until a realistic alternative presents itself, or until pressure of events forces a new direction on them. In present circumstances, some further diminutions of the grosser effects of apartheid are possible and likely. But that is all. This might in itself be sufficient for the Reagan Administration's purposes, if it serves to discourage opposition inside South Africa and in the world. But unfortunately for the policymakers in Washington, all indications are that it is not going to happen this way. Instead, white resistance to more fundamental change is creating ever greater unrest among blacks, coloreds, and Indians, and this is bound to accelerate the country's decline.

Reagan may have made peace.

# NAMIBIA BREAKTHROUGH?

## BY ROBERT A. MANNING

DON'T LOOK NOW, but while everyone was following the Awacs drama on Capitol Hill, the Administration quietly came to the brink of what may become its first substantive foreign policy achievement: a settlement of the intractable Namibia conflict.

It is startling that a foreign policy characterized primarily by military chest-thumping and cold war rhetorical bluster may fashion its first accomplishment out of pragmatism, continuity from the Carter Administration, and multilateral negotiations. But as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker returns home from an Africa shuttle designed to sell a Reagan-led Western initiative to all concerned parties, there are unmistakable signs that peace may be at hand.

At first glance this might not appear likely. Before and after South Africa's invasion of Angola in late August, there had appeared to be a heightening both of tensions in the region and of belligerence on the part of white South Africa. But it is useful to recall that only weeks before the Lancaster House talks, which produced a peaceful resolution of the Zimbabwe conflict, Ian Smith, then Rhodesia's white leader, also conducted massive raids into neighboring Zambia and Mozambique—and then almost immediately went on to negotiate a deal that brought his Marxist foes to power. It could be argued that South Africa's divided white establishment has allowed the military a last hurrah so that the generals can now say they did not lose the war. In an interview shortly after the invasion, South Africa's Defense Minister, Magnus Malan, said of Namibia, "This is the type of battle you never win on the battlefield. You win it in the political field."

THE BIGGEST obstacle to a Namibia settlement has been a lack of trust. In theory, South Africa and the South-West Africa People's Organization agreed in 1978 on a plan, based on U.N. Resolution 435, for a cease-fire, a U.N.-supervised transition process, and free elections. In practice, South Africa, which illegally occupies the disputed territory, has backed out each time moves were made to implement the U.N. plan.

The Reagan Administration inherited the stalemated initiative, declared it a "dead letter" in its present form, and proceeded to embark on a policy dubbed "constructive engagement." Simply put, this policy has sought to coddle South Africa with public displays of affection (such as the veto of the U.N. resolution condemning Pretoria's Angola invasion) in the hope that American friendship would induce the apartheid regime to make concessions. This policy has drawn widespread condemnation in black Africa and has made even our NATO allies uncomfortable.

At the same time, the Administration linked a Namibia settlement to the withdrawal of some 15,000 Cuban troops from Angola, and suggested that the Marxist MPLA government in Angola would have to make a deal with the South African-backed UNITA guerrillas. In addition, the Reaganauts floated the idea of "constitutional principles" to be agreed upon before implementing a Namibia settlement. When the initial international furor died down, the Administration began six months of quiet diplomacy aimed at selling this package. During that time, the U.S. softened its position. As a result, it has achieved a dialogue with black Africa and South Africa, and a consensus within the five-nation Western contact group that has led the negotiations on behalf of the U.N. Security Council.

Most diplomats involved in the negotiations concede that the biggest hurdle to an independence settlement is South Africa. From Prime Minister P. W. Botha's point of view, Namibia is closer to home than Zimbabwe—almost an extension of South Africa

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to do. After the hiatus of Vorster's last years there were understandable expectations for Botha's government, especially as he was already known as a "verligte" (an enlightened one), in contrast to a "verkrampte" (conservative). It was widely believed he would apply to politics the thinking of army leaders that defending the country's borders and ensuring internal peace rested only in part on military success, and that emphasis must be on winning the minds and hearts of blacks, coloreds, and Indians. In Botha's early days he was described by a newspaper writer as moving through the country like a "white whirlwind."

THE SECOND point to be made is that Botha has never contemplated any basic restructuring of the separate development ideology. He adheres as firmly as Vorster did to the Verwoerdian concept of a Balkanization of South Africa that gives the overwhelming bulk of land to the minority whites. He has zealously pushed ahead with hiving off chunks of land to form tribal ministates; their so-called independence is recognized only by South Africa. This is solving the racial problem by sleight-of-hand, since, theoretically, once all ten decreed ministates are established, there will no longer be any black South Africans: they will all have become citizens of the ministates, even though they continue to live and work in South Africa. Botha's Constellation of States concept has some relevance here: it does at least provide the means for formally arranging the ministates inside an economic framework which they have never left anyway. In the rest of southern Africa the constellation has gone down like a lead balloon: nations such as Lesotho and Zimbabwe are doing their utmost to lessen their economic dependency on South Africa and are not in the least interested in embracing apartheid.

Much as it sounds like comic opera, separate development is in earnest. And its most far-reaching consequence is that it places a ceiling—and not a particularly high one—on the extent of change actually possible. The point of separate development is to maintain white interest and domination in most of South Africa. That automatically excludes any possibility of power-sharing with blacks. The influx control laws—which determine where blacks can live and work, and which are backed by penal sanctions—are an essential component of Botha's philosophy. The inhumanity of Nyanga, where squatters were deprived in midwinter of their flimsy plastic shelters, is an inevitable product of the system. Much of the apparatus of apartheid cannot be dismantled, for to do so would be to destroy what whites are seeking to preserve. Government leaders have been at pains to stress that segregated living areas and segregated schools are not open to negotiation. It is now clear that the Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act cannot be scrapped, because this would undermine the foundation of apartheid—the maintenance of white "purity." The talk is of removing "hurtful discrimination," whatever that might mean, rather than racial discrimination itself.

This does not mean that changes are not being made. On the labor front there is progress toward giving black workers some rights of expression and representation, as a result of the reports of the Wiehahn Commission (set up, incidentally, by Vorster). But independently of the government, worker organization is now increasing at a fast pace and employers are responding by gradually agreeing to negotiate with their workers, if necessary ignoring the government-created channels. A President's Council established by Botha is examining a new constitutional dispensation for whites, coloreds, and Indians, and is likely to report early next year. Greater attention is being given to improving the quality of life in Soweto, the vast black ghetto outside Johannesburg. Racial barriers are being eased in a number of respects. But progress is slow and highly limited, and the rhetoric continues unabated. Separate development is variously described as "multinationalism" or "vertical differentiation." There is a "12-point plan," and of course "total strategy" remains the answer to the "total onslaught" which, it is said, is being waged against South Africa from abroad.

Botha has failed to deliver even within the restrictions imposed by his adherence to separate development. Time and again apparent moves forward are so hedged with qualifications that they are either standstill measures or are actually retrogressive. Last year, for example, a fanfare of publicity attended the announcement of three laws which were intended to improve the welfare of blacks in the cities. Closer examination showed that they would achieve the opposite result, and make life even more repressive. The laws were withdrawn and a redrafted version is currently awaited. Perhaps it will be better this time. The government also indicated last year that it intended to scrap a restriction on the number of black workers whom employers could hire in cities; the proposal, just made public, does indeed jettison the law—but replaces it with other restrictions which will have the same effect.

EVEN Botha's attempts to make limited changes have run into the same wall of resistance as did Vorster's. It is in fact worse for Botha because he does not have Vorster's authority, and has had to face a constant threat from Andries Treurnicht, the leader of the verkrampte wing of the National Party. Botha sought to consolidate his position by calling the general election in April; but he had lost before polling day because the choice of candidates ensured he would have to deal with much the same division as before of verligte-verkrampte forces in his parliamentary party caucus. The election itself also revealed a marked shift to the extreme right among some Afrikaners, thus adding to verligte anxieties about how far and fast

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itself. Already a white backlash against the "sellout" of Namibia has begun. Besides Namibia's considerable mineral wealth (uranium, diamonds, and copper) and its Afrikaner community, which numbers about 70,000 people, there is the psychological blow of seeing the last buffer between South Africa and a belt of radical black states disappear and fall under the control of SWAPO's Sam Nujoma, Pretoria's No. 1 bogeyman.

SOUTH AFRICA'S unwillingness thus far to accept a SWAPO victory, no matter how democratic the process, has been the prime obstacle to a settlement. Pretoria's most visible concern has been the question of the U.N.'s impartiality. South African officials are quick to point out that the U.N. General Assembly recognizes SWAPO as the "sole legitimate representative of the people of Namibia." To permit the U.N. to supervise the elections, they argue, is like playing a football game when the referee has put his money on one team. But the recognition of SWAPO is only a nonbinding resolution of the General Assembly—little more than an opinion poll. The U.N. Security Council would be in charge of implementing the plan. Moreover, it is mostly South Africa's occupation of the territory in defiance of all international law that has garnered SWAPO such sympathy at the U.N.

The "confidence-building" measures concocted by the Reagan Administration involve not scrapping the U.N. plan but recycling it. The contact group is peddling a set of "constitutional principles" which the elected constituent assembly would be obligated to write into its constitution. These principles include a two-thirds vote needed to ratify any constitution; an independent judiciary; a bill of rights "consistent with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," guaranteeing fair representation "for all groups representing the Namibian people"; and protection of private property against seizure without fair compensation. Since SWAPO's political direction would be limited by these provisions, and South Africa's control over the economy and the civil service would probably continue, it's hard to see how Namibia could turn into another Angola even if SWAPO wanted it to.

Aside from the particulars of the settlement, part of the package devised by Mr. Crocker apparently requires Angola to withdraw its Cuban troops while South Africa withdraws from Namibia. That would mean, as Mr. Crocker said in a recent interview, "parallel movement on both those issues during a broadly coordinated time frame." For all the tough talk of the Reagan Administration, this formulation amounts to no more than asking the Angolans to put in writing what they have said before (and what the Carter Administration had maintained all along): that when the South African threat to their security disappears, so will the Cubans.

It seems that the negotiating process launched by Mr. Reagan, including its soft approach to South Africa, has achieved results that eluded the Carter Administration. U.S. officials have bluntly told the South Africans that they will never get a better deal than they can under the Reagan Administration, and that an internationally recognized Namibia settlement is a prerequisite to cozy ties between Washington and Pretoria. "We told the South Africans that if they weren't serious about an internationally acceptable settlement to tell us and we would drop the whole project and let them fight it out," a top Crocker aide told me. "If they screw us on Namibia, they won't find anything under their Christmas tree."

One of the presents under the Christmas tree may be stepped-up nuclear cooperation between South Africa and the U.S. A high-level State Department team of nuclear safety specialists recently visited an enrichment facility at Valindaba. The Carter Administration had discussed a quid pro quo whereby the U.S. would agree to supply enriched uranium and nuclear equipment to South Africa if it put all facilities under nuclear safeguards and signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Judging from comments made by State Department officials, and from the Reagan Administration's general loosening of nuclear export restrictions, this is precisely the path now being taken by the Reagan Administration.

BUT South Africa is straddling two seemingly contradictory objectives concerning Namibia. On the one hand, the Botha regime seeks to avoid charges of white retreat, which may be perceived at home as the beginning of white political suicide. On the other hand, Pretoria is well aware that the Reagan Administration has put its neck on the chopping block for South Africa and has received precious little in return. Many tough issues are still ahead, including the composition of the U.N. peacekeeping force (one formula might be troops from the Western Five, plus Nigeria) and the fate of Walvis Bay, Namibia's key deep-water port, which is claimed by South Africa. But the initial responses from Angola and South Africa suggest that the logjam has been broken and the talks are on track. Most important, a sense of diplomatic momentum appears to be building, locking all sides into the process.

It is not known what, if any, secret guarantees have been offered to Pretoria. State Department officials insist that there haven't been any, and that the only carrot being offered, as Mr. Crocker said in a recent interview, "is a credible diplomacy to inspire the confidence of all the parties." Jan Christiaan Heunis, Minister of Internal Affairs, told me that the biggest difference between this round of talks and previous efforts is the changed perception of the U.S. stance. This official went so far as to say that South Africa was now part of Secretary of State Alexander Haig's "strategic consensus" against the Soviets.

The closer Namibia has come to an independence


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settlement, the more the Administration has softened its highly ideological approach. Gone is Mr. Haig's characterization of SWAPO as a band of Soviet-backed Marxist terrorists. In a recent interview, Mr. Crocker conceded that SWAPO is not necessarily a Marxist group. "There are, no question about it, legitimate nationalists within SWAPO," he said. "There are also committed Marxists. We don't believe it is possible to predict confidently what a SWAPO government would do once in office." The Administration's previous insistence that UNITA guerrillas be brought into the Angolan government as part of a settlement—a highly unrealistic goal—has apparently been dropped as well.

If a settlement is reached by 1982, as now seems likely, it will be at least a partial vindication for Mr. Crocker's constructive engagement policy. The Carter Administration, which launched the process, must be given some of the credit. But if the talks do succeed, there will be something to be said for the Reagan Administration's blend of hardball tactics and pragmatism. A Reagan-induced Namibia settlement would put the Administration back in the good graces of black Africa, and would buy time for South Africa.

Just as it took Richard Nixon to open relations with China, it may be Ronald Reagan who produces a SWAPO-led Namibia. And if U.S. policy also induces substantial reform of South Africa's apartheid policies, Soviet influence in southern Africa could indeed be greatly reduced. But if the present effort to accommodate South Africa fails, the Administration will have proved its critics right. Should a Namibia accord lead to a U.S.-South Africa alliance in which apartheid is condoned, tension with the Western allies will increase and any good will achieved with black Africa will be destroyed. This would be too high a price to pay.

How the rage for supply-side riches is impoverishing our politics.

# BEYOND REAGANOMICS

## BY ROBERT B. REICH

REAGANOMICS is starting to unravel. Since August, bond prices have tumbled. In October, the Dow Jones industrial average was at its lowest point in 18 months. The economy is at a virtual standstill. Unemployment is edging upward. Inflation has been in double digits for the last three months. Over 10,000 companies have filed for bankruptcy so far this year, a 48 percent increase over last.

The theory behind the Reagan program was that large tax cuts would provide rapid economic growth (people work harder and save more) while restrictive monetary policies would simultaneously slow inflation (with less money in circulation, prices stabilize). But there is no evidence for either of these propositions. The combination of tight money and an expected deficit has caused interest rates to climb precipitously. The high rates are choking off investment (why invest in a new enterprise or expand an old one when the payoff is so uncertain, relative to the return on Treasury bills or money market funds?), and are discouraging consumers from buying houses and cars. The high interest rates are also swelling the interest on the government's debt, thereby raising the overall deficit and increasing people's fears of more inflation.

Who's to blame? Well, Wall Street is blaming the expected budget deficit. The Administration is blaming Wall Street. Monetarists are blaming supply siders. Supply siders are blaming monetarists. It's a Babel of graphs, numbers, projections, models, and assumptions—a cacophony of confused economists holding press conferences, giving interviews, writing newspaper columns. The more they disagree, the louder their clamor becomes; the louder they get, the more attention we pay them; the more we listen to them, the further we are led astray.

For all its initial hype, Reaganomics is revealing itself as a drastically simplified and bastardized version of the same Keynesian principles that have dominated economic policy for 35 years. Even if we are not all Keynesians now, as Richard Nixon once proclaimed we were, we are at least neo-Keynesians, post-Keynesians, pre-Keynesians, or anti-Keynesians. The aggregates in which John Maynard Keynes viewed the economy—the general price level, total unemployment, the money supply, government spending, tax

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revenues, the gross national product—continue to be the building blocks with which economic policies are constructed. Keynes worried that excessive savings by individuals and firms would result in unemployment; his prescription, appropriate to an economy prone to recession and depression, was to stimulate demand by increasing government spending and the supply of money. Today's worry is different: that inadequate savings will discourage capital formation and productivity. Accordingly, today's dominant prescription is to reduce taxes, spending, and the supply of money. But the frames of reference—the undifferentiated aggregates from which economic policy is constructed—are much the same. And economic policymaking continues to be dominated by the belief in economic *management*—in the possibility and desirability of altering these economic aggregates through the application of neutral, general principles.

The insidious and most destructive aspect of Reaganomics, however, is not its cartoon view of the economy. It is the use of economics to disguise and distort political reality. By casting the economic debate in narrowly instrumental terms, the Administration impoverishes the national dialogue. First, by focusing exclusively on inflation, investment, and economic growth, Reaganomics precludes discussion of today's most important and perplexing question: who benefits and who is harmed when the various aggregates that comprise economic policy are manipulated? Second, the ahistorical and acultural ways in which these aggregates are presumed to interrelate obscure some of the most critical aspects of modern American society, particularly the roles of large institutions like corporations and government bureaucracies in setting the pattern of capital investment. And third, the ethos of economic management neutralizes and sanitizes the economic debate, removing it from the hurly-burly of politics and turning it over to a narrowly technical, instrumental specialty open to only a select few who are trained in the field. Each of these three distortions merits a closer look.

MERE changes in aggregate levels of unemployment, inflation, investment, consumption, and the G.N.P. tell us nothing about who among us gains or loses from those changes. And yet this is often the most important question. Is inflation worse than unemployment? It depends on where you sit. Welfare recipients have done rather badly over the past decade, with average benefits falling by approximately 20 percent in real terms. Steelworkers, on the other hand, have done relatively well—enjoying a gain in real income of about 38 percent. The situation of the elderly and of most blue-collar workers has remained about the same. When we use unemployment to battle inflation, who gets drafted into the inflation fight? Inevitably those who can least afford it—young blacks in central city slums (90 percent of whom are now unemployed), women (38 percent more likely to be unemployed than men), and Hispanics (75 percent more likely than whites). When we cut taxes and government expenditures in an effort to spur savings and investment, who benefits? Surely the more wealthy of our citizens at the expense of our poor, at least in the short run.

Is public spending on space exploration preferable to public spending on parks? Programs to spur high technology may well generate more overall wealth for the nation, but they create fewer jobs where they are needed most. When our gross national product rises along with crime and pollution, who reaps the rewards? Those whose added income enables them to purchase goods and services which protect them from crime and remove them from the source of pollution. These changes are neither unambiguously good nor bad. There is no "best" economic policy, but a broad range of policies which alter people's lives in radically different ways.

POLICIES that spread the benefits and burdens of economic change more equitably among our citizens are preferable to those which widen the gap between rich and poor, and not only on moral grounds. Economic growth and inflation are themselves related to widely shared notions of social justice. It stands to reason that people who feel justly treated by the "system" are more apt to work productively within it than are those who feel that the dice are loaded against them. The bitterness and alienation of ghetto youth are evidence enough. But beyond this obvious fact, the very process of sharing the burdens and arriving at a consensus about how they should be allocated can motivate people to work harder. In this respect the experience of modern Japan seems to contradict the teachings of Max Weber, who attributed capitalism's rise in the West to the demise of traditional relationships like guilds, parishes, and clans, and the simultaneous rise of individualism. Japan's emphasis on community, consensus, and long-term security for its workers—based squarely on traditional communal relationships—appears to have spurred its citizens to greater feats of capitalism than has the social-Darwinist individualism of modern America.

A final and signficant factor is the relationship between our nation's stock of "human capital" and our productivity. In its zeal to trim the federal budget, the Reagan Administration seems to have forgotten that America's past economic success was based to a large degree on a skillful, educated, and healthy work force. Thus our collective expenditures on education, training, health, nutrition, and similar intangibles should not be included on the "consumption" side of the national economic ledger; they are investments in the future productivity of our people. Mr. Reagan's deep budget cuts in education aids and loans, training and retraining, Medicaid payments for the poor, food


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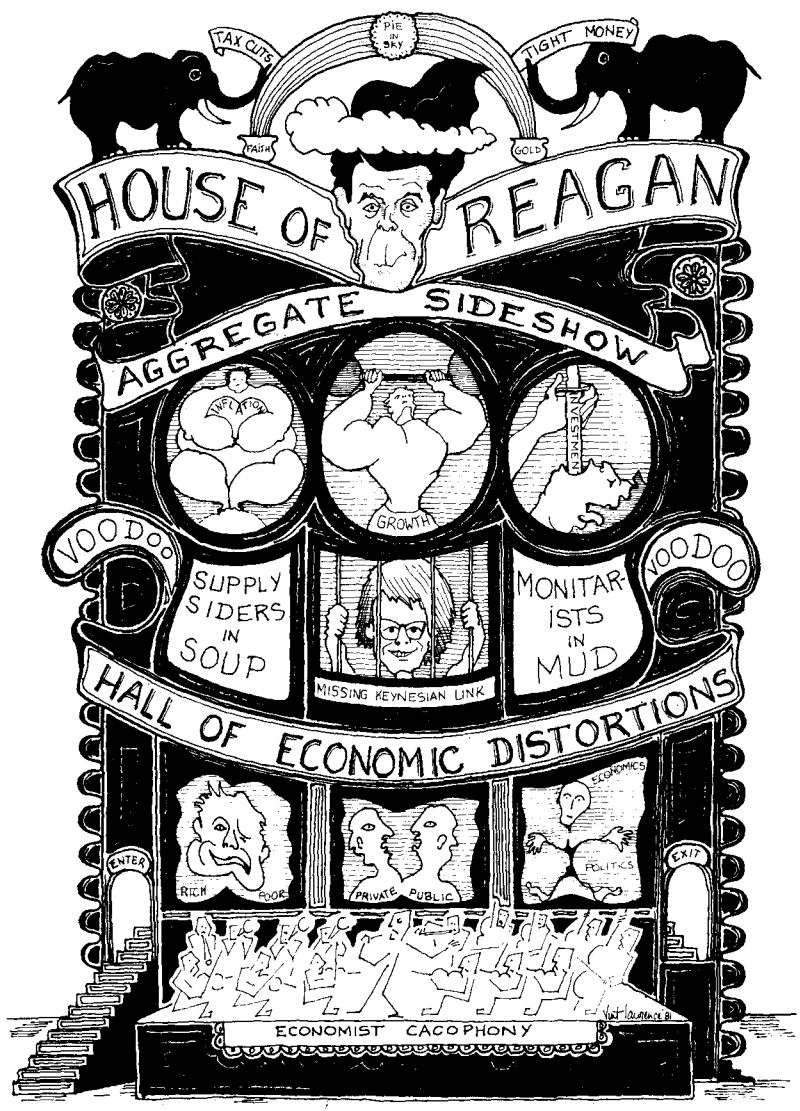
stamps, and nutrition benefits for expectant mothers threaten our stock of human capital, and bode ill for our future economic growth.

All these distributional effects and relationships are hidden within the current debate about economic policy. Their barest outlines are suggested only on occasion—when, for example, a conservative economist argues that unemployment insurance and Social Security payments should be cut on the theory that this will reduce unemployment and increase personal savings. For these results to occur, fear must act as a powerful motivator. Who would experience such fear? Those for whom unemployment insurance and Social Security now provide some buffer against poverty. What is the personal cost of such fear likely to be? What are its consequences for productivity? For crime? For the overall health and stability of families and communities? One can only guess at the answers, but none of them are found in the aggregate levels of savings and unemployment.




DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In its obsession with aggregates, Reaganomics confuses means with ends. The primary goal of a nation's economic policy should be to improve the standard of living of its citizens. The concept of "standard of living" is, of course, vague and subjective. Most people probably would agree that it is comprised of at least three elements: the real goods and services that can be purchased by a nation's citizens; the availability of certain goods that cannot be purchased directly but that contribute to most people's sense of well-being—such as clean air and water, security from crime and accident, financial security, and public health; and the extent to which these goods and services, both private and public, are shared among citizens. Economic goals such as growth, higher productivity, lower inflation, and a strong currency are means of achieving a higher standard of living, not ends in themselves. A reduction in a nation's standard of living in order to achieve these economic goals is justifiable, therefore, only as a temporary expedient to achieve an even higher standard of living in the future. The debate over economic aggregates often obscures this most fundamental premise.

The second way the current economic debate distorts reality is by failing to acknowledge the unique cultural and institutional forms which now dominate America, and which determine how its capital resources are absorbed and utilized.

Reaganomics posits two dominant sectors, the public and the private, which compete for limited resources and thereby offset one another. But America's institutions cannot be so neatly categorized as public or private. The line between the two is indistinct. And even if some elements of the public and the private can be differentiated, it would hardly be correct to say that they actively compete against one another. They usually exist in symbiotic harmony, infusing each other with resources.

Contrary to the "off-setting" hypothesis, the size of the public sector appears to bear little relation to investment and productivity in the private sector. By any measure, our government is quite small relative to that of most other industrialized nations, whose rates of productivity have been higher than ours over the past decade. The share of G.N.P. that comes directly to government as tax revenues is lower in the United States than in every other industrial country except Japan. The per-capita debt of the federal government,



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adjusted for inflation, has not changed for 20 years; as a proportion of G.N.P. it is smaller than that in West Germany, Japan, and France. Most other industrial countries spend a higher proportion of G.N.P. on education, social security, unemployment insurance, and public health than we do. And government regulation in the form of capital expenditures on pollution control and safety has totaled no more than six percent of our total industrial investment over the past ten years—significantly lower than in most other industrial countries, including Japan.

More fundamentally, the overall level of capital investment may have less effect on a nation's real growth, unemployment, and inflation rates than does the *pattern* of investment. Our rate of productivity growth began to decline between 1967 and 1973—when the rate of growth of capital formation was stronger than it has been at any time during the postwar period. Indeed, our investment in manufacturing as a percentage of the total output of manufactured goods has increased steadily over the last two decades, and has not been substantially below that of Japan and West Germany—particularly when one takes account of higher U.S. expenditures for the leasing of equipment and for investment in foreign markets.

IN ANY event, as our economy shifts from capital-intensive industries (like autos, steel, cement, and fibers) to newer "knowledge-intensive" industries (like computers, electronic instruments, and industrial machinery) and to services, there may be less need for high levels of capital investment. Over the last two decades, service employment has increased 72 percent as compared to 21 percent in manufacturing. Service exports like engineering, insurance, banking, and consulting, which require less capital per worker than manufacturing businesses, are now the fastest growing part of our trade account—almost 16 percent a year as compared with just 6.7 percent growth in merchandise trade.

The *pattern* of investment has not been a central concern of economic policymaking; the assumption has been that capital markets automatically allocate resources to their most productive uses. This has been a serious oversight, because capital markets increasingly have been shaped by government policies—tariffs, quotas, marketing orders, price supports, patents, special tax credits and accelerated depreciation provisions, loan guarantees, direct subsidies, subsidized insurance, government procurement contracts, and assorted immunities from antitrust enforcement. In 1980 alone, tax benefits to particular industries totaled $70 billion; the government had $221.6 billion in loan guarantees and $60 billion in direct loans outstanding, and had $2 trillion worth of outstanding insurance.

A hodgepodge of government subsidies is awarded to business: the government now spends five times as much on commercial fisheries as it does on steel; it gives $455 million in tax breaks to the timber industry but none at all to the semiconductor industry; it provides more than $6 billion in loans and loan guarantees to the shipbuilding industry, compared to about $940 million to the automobile industry. In addition, tariffs on C.B. radios, apparel, shoes, and sugar, among other commodities, now cost U.S. consumers over $2.8 billion a year; import restrictions on steel have raised the costs and reduced the competitiveness of every U.S. product dependent on that metal (motorcycles, automobiles, appliances, machinery); and special tax and credit provisions have channeled one-third of gross domestic investment into residential construction. Taken together, these government provisions serve to direct capital to particular industries amounting to 13.9 percent of the G.N.P.

The Reagan Administration shows no sign of moderating or reducing these patterning policies. On the contrary, many are being enlarged. The recent tax legislation, for example, makes no pretense of closing tax loopholes. In fact, it resurrects some of the worst of the old loopholes, such as preferential treatment of stock options, and creates some new ones, such as the bail-out of savings and loan institutions. Meanwhile the modified Reagan capital recovery program will divert industrial investment from equipment to structures, which are blessed with a far more attractive depreciation schedule. This will confer huge tax benefits on big utilities and manufacturing companies and on the oil and gas industry, but will do nothing for high-technology companies, small businesses, and service industries with low capital requirements.

Tariffs, quotas, and price supports of one kind or another will continue to distort capital markets. Mr. Reagan's "voluntary" quota on Japanese auto exports not only weakens the discipline of the marketplace on domestic auto wages and prices, it also invites protectionist retaliation from abroad. The Administration has also signaled its willingness to continue or increase the protection accorded to American textile and apparel manufacturers. And it has agreed to support domestic growers of sugar, peanuts, and other agricultural commodities to the tune of some $9 billion through 1985.

FINALLY, the Administration's apparent retreat from antitrust enforcement has opened up the floodgates to conglomerate mergers. In the first half of 1981 alone, corporations spent well over $40 billion acquiring one another, a 60 percent jump over one year ago. Despite all the claims about the "synergy" that such combinations produce, there is very little evidence to suggest that the average merger has enhanced the basic profitability or productivity of the merging enterprises. Pan American's merger with National Airlines not only has failed to produce the



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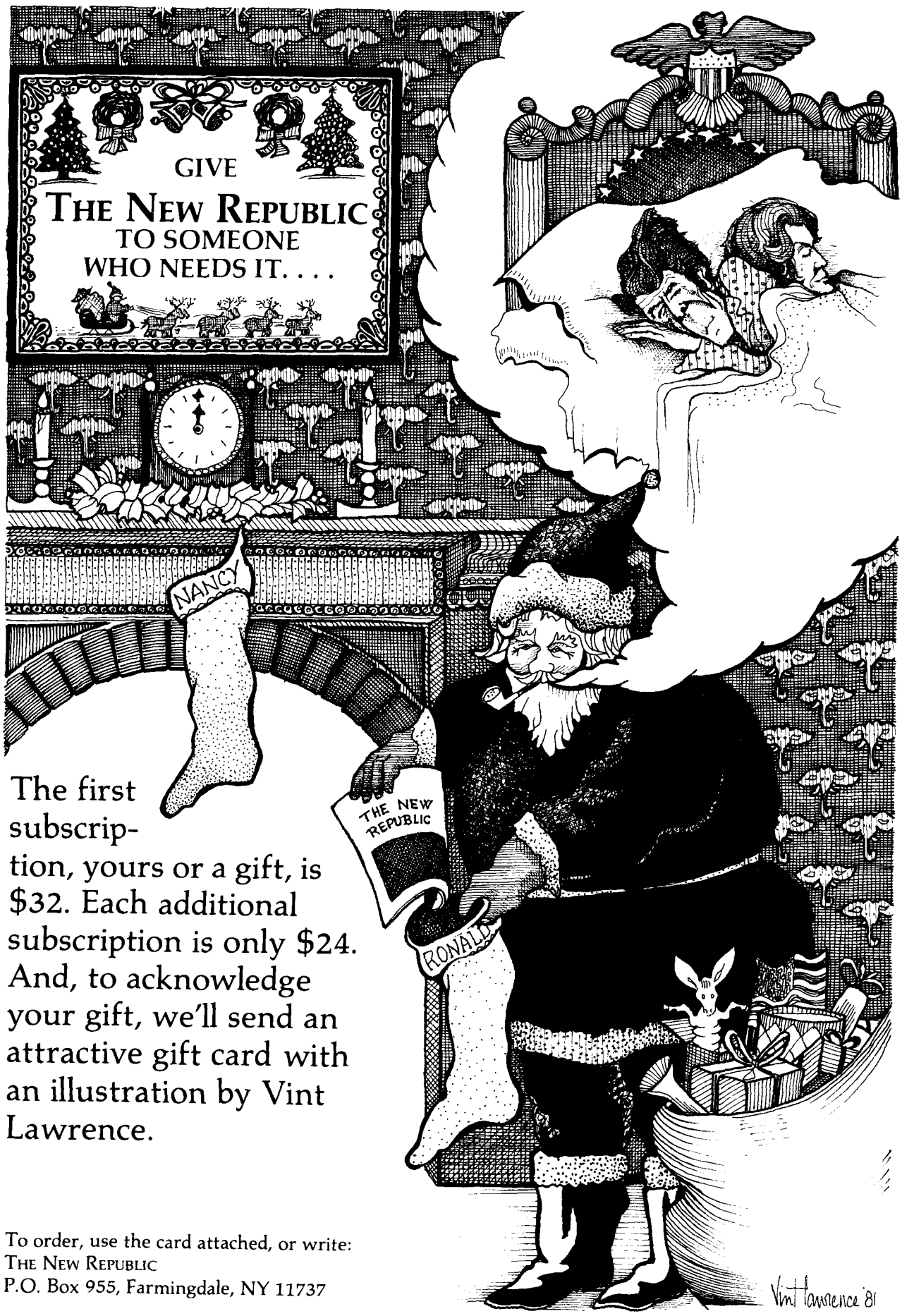


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efficiencies that were claimed for it but also has brought the airline to the brink of financial catastrophe. Exxon's plunge into the "office of the future" has been an unmitigated disaster. The office division is losing money at a rate that would bankrupt almost anyone else—in 1980 alone, a $150-million loss on sales of $270 million. Mobil's purchase of Montgomery Ward has proved almost as ill-advised.

How do these patterning policies affect inflation? They probably contribute significantly to the upward bias of our prices. The vast web of government subsidies and protections serve to cushion most individuals and firms against economic shocks, including the shocks administered by the government itself in the form of fiscal and monetary restraint. At the same time, these subsidies and protections enable companies to pass on cost increases (including increased wages) to consumers and industrial purchasers without fear of competitive retaliation. Our growing industrial concentration via conglomeration accomplishes much the same thing, permitting large conglomerates to act as their own central bankers, relatively immune to tight money markets. In our largest firms, as in totalitarian regimes, issues of economics have become a subspeciality of accounting. The ultimate cause of inflation has been the successful escape by individuals and firms from the insecurity of the marketplace.

Patterning policies have an even greater effect on unemployment and economic growth. It is no mere coincidence, for example, that conglomerate mergers are a rarity in Japan and West Germany, and that these countries have substantially outperformed us over the last decade. Asset-rearranging through merger is absurdly wasteful. It ties up huge lines of credit, diverts the attention of corporate executives (who spend their time fending off takeovers, responding to depositions, and devising novel tax and accounting schemes rather than building better products), and creates vast parasitic industries in law, accounting, tax consulting, and finance, to which some of our most talented and creative citizens are drawn.

Japan and West Germany have sought to coordinate their patterning policies, not to hide or ignore them. In both countries, tariffs, taxes, and industrial subsidies have been used expressly to ease the shift of each economy from industries that are becoming less competitive in world markets (like textiles and carbon steel) to industries that are becoming more competitive (fiber optics, semiconductors, and robotics). A key component of these coordinated industrial policies is the maintenance of near-full employment through programs designed to provide workers in declining industries with retraining, relocation help, and job security. The Reagan Administration has moved in exactly the opposite direction, reducing or eliminating such worker assistance programs.

By overlooking the pattern of capital investment, and the business-government relationships that underlie it, our current debate over economic policy has ignored some of the most important reasons why we are in our present mess and some of the most useful ideas for getting out again.

I SHOULD WRITE ABOUT REAGAN...BUT IT'S SO HARD TO GET MAD AT HIM.
ALLIES FURIOUS OVER LATEST REAGAN GAFFE!
ADMINISTRATION BOTCHES THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER!
REAGAN RIPS OFF AT AVIAN AGAIN
LORDY HAVE MERCY! LOOK WHAT HE'S DONE NOW!
D.C. PUNDIT

THE THIRD way Reaganomics distorts present-day reality is by obscuring the political choices that underlie it. One set of choices concerns the negative impacts of business investment decisions on the public. An inescapable fact of industrial life in the second half of the 20th century is that the public side effects of private decisions about where capital should be invested are often substantially larger than the direct returns to investors. We are all too familiar with the most dramatic of such side effects: the gradual fouling of our ground water by toxic industrial wastes; the increasing levels of acidity in our lakes due to airborne sulfur dioxide; the economic and social devastation of regions and communities from which major employers depart; the threat to public health from oil spills, leaks from nuclear reactors, and accidents in the transport of hazardous chemicals; and the appearance of carcinomas in whole generations of workers exposed to particular substances. In recent years these sorts of side effects have begun to loom so large relative to private returns on investment that it is becoming anomalous to view them any longer as side effects. In many industries, they have emerged as the primary consequences of private investment decisions.

The pattern and level of investment in coal, for example, have vast consequences: for the economies of Western coal states and of Appalachia, for the financial viability of electric utilities and railroads, for soil erosion from strip-mining, for mine disasters and black lung. The fate of the U.S. auto industry similarly affects the rest of our society. One out of every six jobs in the economy now depends on the auto industry; it uses 21 percent of the steel manufactured in the U.S., 60 percent of the synthetic rubber, 25 percent of the glass, 20 percent of the machine tools; and the use of its products kills some 50,000 Americans each year on the highways, maims hundreds of thousands more, and shrouds entire cities in smog. The level and pat-



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tern of investment in steel, chemicals, nuclear energy, drugs, textiles, and electronics also reverberate through our national life—improving our standard of living in some ways while jeopardizing it in others.

Although these public side effects continue to grow relative to the private investment returns that underlie them, Reaganomics continues to assume that investment is a matter of economics, not politics, and that therefore the right public response to these "market imperfections" is to apply management techniques like cost-benefit analysis in order to achieve a better "fit" between public and private needs. There is little question that government can and should regulate more efficiently. And cost-benefit analysis, coupled with the creation of new regulatory incentives, may well be part of the answer. But the process of devising engineering-type remedies for these "market imperfections" often hides their fundamentally political character, and obscures their real dimensions. Economic analysis is a useful tool for getting information that one needs to make a given decision and understand its consequences. But when it substitutes for political dialogue about the values that should be attached to various alternatives, it can become an exercise in reductionism and demagoguery.

POLITICAL choices abound in economic policy-making. They are embedded in issues of regulation, inflation, unemployment, and economic growth. But the ethos of economic management often relegates these choices to an insignificant place in its debates. For politicians it is often much easier to blame our ills on impersonal economic forces and to look for technical solutions, rather than to make explicit the hard choices that otherwise will be made implicitly. By describing the economy in mechanical terms, policy-makers can promise renewal through adjustments which will get the economy "moving again."

An explicit *incomes* policy, for example, would bring into the open all the ways in which government policies now work to the benefit of some people and to the detriment of others. It would require aboveboard choices about how the burden of fighting inflation should be allocated. Similarly, an explicit *industrial* policy to spur economic growth would require an open debate about the multifarious ways in which large corporations and the government allocate capital in the economy. Does this allocation make sense? Is it just? Is it efficient? And an explicit *regulatory* policy would reveal hard choices about the social costs of a given path of economic development—the concrete sacrifices of health, safety, and the environment that it would entail. One has only to imagine the hue and cry that would go up if Congress were to deal expressly with any one of these issues to understand how much political controversy is now submerged within "economic policy."

The notion underlying Mr. Reagan's economic policy-making—that the economic and political spheres of our lives can be separated—is a relatively new one. The very word "economics" was not firmly established until Alfred Marshall wrote his *Principles* in 1890. Before then, the term was "political economy"—with the adjective serving as a constant reminder of the "economy's" origins and dependence. The entire field emerged in the late 18th century from moral philosophy, where questions of rights, duties, and social obligations dominated. Thus it was impossible to conceive of economic relationships outside their specific political and social contexts. What societies chose to relegate to trade, and how that trade was to be structured, were explicitly political issues.

The modern intellectual separation of economics from politics has given each sphere a rather strange half-life. The study of politics views people as intensely social animals—forming coalitions, interest groups, and political parties, sometimes exercising statesmanship and altruism and sometimes colluding against the rest of the public, but always acting in a collective context in which the central questions concern the public good. By contrast, the study of economics removes people from their historically located societies and views them as individual "maximizers" who are motivated by a universal norm of rational self-interest. There is some truth to both visions. We are the products of our social environments, yet at the same time we are universally alone. But it is the *interaction* between our public and our private selves that is critical. It is in the balance between the two that we simultaneously preserve our autonomy and establish our membership in the human race. Neither sphere—public or private, political or economic—must be allowed to triumph, for to permit that would be to fall victim to either mass tyranny or solipsism.

AT THIS point in American history we need a political revitalization as badly as we need an economic one. The two are inseparable. It is not enough that the factual premises underlying "supply-side" economics are showing themselves to be false, and that Reaganomics is unraveling. There is a more important lesson, and it concerns the way economic policy is formulated and expounded. America can reduce its unemployment and inflation, and can enjoy economic growth, only to the extent that it harnesses the social ideals of all its citizens in the process—spreading the burdens and benefits equitably, compensating for losses attendant upon economic change, and striving for justice and decency. A "trickle-down" economic policy ultimately will fail because it will not engage the commitment of all of America. On the contrary, it will further cut us off from one another. We need an economics that will reaffirm our political life together. The search for the next economics must occur within the streets and precincts of political America. Those are the only places where it can be found.



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# STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

## High Life and Low

Eighty-one is a pretty good age for a weaver of brocades. George Cukor has been such a weaver and a fashion designer—high fashion, to be sure—for a long, long time, and in terms of tex-

*Rich and Famous*
(United Artists)

*. . . All the Marbles*
(United Artists)

ture, his hand is steady. *Rich and Famous* is quality fabric.

But it's not much more. To watch the film is like watching a bolt of gold-threaded material being unrolled for you in an expensive shop. The owner just keeps unrolling it until he comes to the end. The film has no real drama, no moments of consequence that signally affect the characters' lives: events come their way, and just keep happening until the film stops. It could easily have gone on another hour or two with the same sense of glossy unrolling.

We watch two women from their college days to the present, one of whom, Jacqueline Bisset, is seriously devoted to literature, while the other, Candice Bergen, partly out of jealousy, chats and fantasizes her way to wealth as a popular novelist. Bisset helps Bergen elope from college with David Selby, and when the three meet again some years later, the attractive Selby is attracted to Bisset. More partings and reunions through the years, Bergen gets divorced and her daughter grows up, Bisset has affairs that last or don't last, and at the end, after their various silken turmoils, Bergen absents herself from a splashy New York party in her honor to taxi up to Connecticut and sit before the fire with her lonely, proud friend. The script by Gerald Ayres is drawn—extracted painfully at times—from a play by John Van Druten that was filmed in 1943 with Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins; but that last scene reminded me of a much more recent film about two women, Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends*.

Bisset wears scruffy tweed jackets and no makeup (apparently), and is beautiful. I didn't quite see how she was suffering financially through her dedication to art: she has a gorgeous house in Connecticut and stays in a suite at the Algonquin; but despite the fact that Ayres makes her quote Yeats and display other cultural merit badges, she is quite believable as a writer who has difficulty in writing well and who wants nothing from life but the chance to keep facing that difficulty—except to have love affairs, which also are difficult.

Bergen is Southern, consciously gorgeous, gorgeously madeup and overdressed, rolling through life like a 19th-century carriage, dispensing homey locutions as she goes. ("Why, you sly old land-turtle," she says to Bisset once as they embrace.) Bergen has been hailed for the improvement in her acting. Maybe. It may also be that the not-quite-convincing human being she plays happens to fit Bergen's not-quite-convincing abilities. We'll see.

Ayres has updated matters, of course. Bisset's major romance toward the end is with a young reporter from *Rolling Stone*. (He certainly couldn't be from the *New York Times* if the picture was to be hip.) There's much talk about a national book prize for which Bergen is one of the candidates and of which Bisset is one of the judges—conversation that I thought verged on the unethical for a woman of Bisset's alleged character. But this is probably to take it all too seriously. The film is like one of the novels that have made Bergen rich and famous, and it all just keeps rolling without a real wrinkle. One can't say that Cukor's hand has never lost its skill—*Justine*? *Travels With My Aunt*? *The Blue Bird*?—but it's certainly steady here.

*Personal Note.* When I was a high school boy in Manhattan, we lived across the hall from a lovely old Hungarian lady, a widow, as I remember, small, with her white hair in a neat bun, and with a slight limp. Occasionally she would present us with a delicious Hungarian cake that she had baked. Mrs. Cukor had a son, George, who had been a stock company director in Rochester, New York, had made his mark on Broadway, and was beginning to move into films. He visited his mother frequently. I was once introduced to him in the hallway and was told that he was about to direct a picture with Tallulah Bankhead. It was *Tarnished Lady*, 1931; and in an abstract sense, he has been making it ever since.

What I didn't need in my life, any more than anyone else does, is another paradox. Yet here it is, called . . . *All the Marbles*. (If there were an Oscar for clumsiest title of the year, this would be a shoo-in.) Without any shadow of a question, this film exploits women; and there's not much more doubt that it's a goodhearted, enjoyable comedy.

It's about women wrestlers. There's no point in countering that male wrestling exploits men, too, and that women (and some men) get turned on sexually by male wrestlers. Male wrestling can make some claim to being primarily a

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

*Chariots of Fire*. Excellently made, basically true story of two British runners in the 1924 Olympics, transformed into moving social drama.

*The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The interwoven stories—of Victorian England and of the actors performing the Victorian plot—are more woolly than rich, but the acting and the visual texture are exquisite.

*Time Bandits*. For children. And adults. The writing, by two members of the Monty Python gang, will keep parents chuckling; the adventures of a small boy and six dwarfs in time and space will please everyone.

*The Woman Next Door*. Truffaut dexterously mixing the Truffaut ingredients—passion, fate, and a man murdered by a woman. Gripping while it's going; then it goes.

**SK**



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sport; female wrestling is primarily an erotic circus, especially when, as happens in one episode here, it's done in the mud. (The very first evening that I watched television after the war, I saw women wrestling in the mud. What a harbinger—about TV, I mean.)

But I enjoyed . . . *All the Marbles*. Some of the whamming and slamming is hard on the stomach—the audience's as well as the wrestlers'—but *Raging Bull* wasn't blocked from seriousness because we saw Robert De Niro's face smashed askew (in slow motion), and this picture isn't kept from comedy by seeing its two leading women get jumped on and kicked. Despite those episodes—and of course some of the fighting *is* sexy—the picture comes out more convivial and canny than cruel.

Mel Frohman's script is written with breeze and pungency and nicely underplayed tough-guy emotion. Vicki Frederick and Laurene Landon could not be bettered as the "tag team," the California Dolls; they are both competent comediennes, and they both do their own honest-to-grunt wrestling. Peter Falk, their manager, keeps landing on his feet, no matter what the figurative jounce, keeps burrowing ahead with phony/genuine sincerity and unfaltering gab. The editing by Irving C. Rosenblum and Richard Lane is sharp, particularly in the wrestling sequences. The big trick in such iterative scenes—all sports pictures have them—is to vary them as they come along without merely condensing them; Rosenblum and Lane have done it.

They couldn't have done it, however, without the work of the director Robert Aldrich. Much more noted for brutality than bonhomie, Aldrich gets enough violence in this story to satisfy him, yet he emphasizes the American pop culture aspects of the story in a way that makes the struggles of this touring team and their manager sleazily relevant. The entire entourage consists of the two women and Falk in a beat-up old Cadillac roadster, weaving through the Midwest from roadside eateries to motels to funky arenas, until they finally reach the paradise of an engagement in Reno; and Aldrich treats that car as a small world moving through a large one of which it is a microcosm. Joseph Biroc, his usual cinematographer, is first class. Biroc's lighting of dressing rooms and arenas and those identical bedrooms from coast to coast is both unsparing and affectionate; and his glimpses of the factory towns and the factories themselves give the audiences at the arenas a habitation—as well as a reason for being there at wrestling matches, screaming.

# The Meaning Of Buildings

## American Architecture 1607-1976
## by Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper

(M.I.T. Press, 512 pp., $30)

Any developing discipline must recast its history from time to time. Emphases shift, new facts emerge, convincing explanations grow strained, immanent themes are revealed to be ideologies imposed upon the facts. In the past 15 years, American architecture has been undergoing radical changes in the way it explains itself to itself. Since research into both the history and aesthetics of architecture has become more systematic, there is ample reason to want a new "standard history" of American architecture. I would have said "a new orthodoxy of American architecture," but we architects are gun-shy about propounding orthodoxies just now. This avoidance of an ideological stance is reflected in *American Architecture*, which is both its strength and its weakness.

One must say first of all that this is a handsome book, produced with the rational design and stringent production values one has come to associate with architecture books from M.I.T. Press. The illustrations are well chosen, clearly reproduced, and of a size sufficient to illustrate the ideas being discussed. Best of all, when plans are included, they are placed adjacent to the illustrations and oriented so that projections can be made from one to the other. This is a book to be used as well as read.

But it is above all to be read, and a salient feature of the text is the authors' scrupulousness about biases. For example, they avoid the East Coast bias that traditionally has infected histories of American architecture. Thus they pay as much attention to the Spanish mission churches as to the early architecture of New England and Virginia, and they provide welcome insights into the early French architecture of the Midwest. They also avoid the elitist slant of stressing only the name of the architectural firm and neglecting the actual creator of the work. But the most important bias they avoid is the view that modernism represents the inevitable course of architectural history. To understand the role that modernist ideology has played in architectural thinking requires a short excursion into the historiography of architecture.

THE MODERN movement in architecture arrived as a distinctive "look" with the publication of Philip Johnson's and Henry-Russell Hitchcock's *The International Style* in 1932. It arrived as a school of thought with the immigration of the teachers of the Bauhaus a few years later. But the movement received its real historical pedigree with the publication of two books—Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* in 1937 and Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* in 1941. Recasting architectural history, both books advanced the thesis that modernism is the inevitable product of history. Pevsner projected his account back to William Morris, while Giedion offered a series of accounts reaching further back, but the implication of both books was that a mode of thought and action, which we now call modernism, had been present *in nuce* for centuries; only now, with the (inevitable) collapse of tradition, had it come into its own.

This view of a modernist *Zeitgeist* working its will came to dominate thinking about all architectural history. When viewed through the Pevsner-Giedion lens, American architectural history was presented as, on the one hand, a celebration of buildings that attempted to be proto-modern and, on the other, a condemnation of buildings that held back the onward sweep of modernist destiny. Thus the use of iron in the Capitol dome was praised as forward-thinking; the form of the dome, with its conscious historical reference, was con-

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demned as dated. The mechanical devices in Thomas Jefferson's Monticello were applauded as prelusive of our time; its overt Palladian references were regretted as unique to Jefferson's age.

CAREFUL scholarship, sharpened critical thinking, and a change in the intellectual climate have turned architectural thought away from the *Zeitgeist* approach. *American Architecture 1607-1976* reflects this change. The authors avoid determinist cant and retrospective explanation. The problem with this history purged of *Zeitgeist*, however, is that it leaves us with a picture in which we see things change but can't make out what's causing them to change. The authors characterize the nature of the change as an oscillation between an impulse toward tastefulness—toward the fashionable "new" (whatever that may be at the moment) —and an impulse toward tradition, the "familiar." But that oscillation, though true, does not in itself provide any explanation, any agency of stylistic change. Just from the slice of history we have lived through, we know that styles constantly change, and for a variety of reasons. But in a history of such shifts we want, if not the overarching theory of stylistic change that an orthodoxy provides, then at least some individual explanations of the more important shifts.

To what extent, for example, is ideology—that is, the concepts we use to make sense of the world—the unacknowledged agent driving such significant stylistic changes? Is it not possible that behind the motivation to "build different" is the desire to *be* different? Or, more precisely, to have one's environment reflect new and different values? If we took that view, then the picture we would see in history would be one in which people adopted a new style not merely because it looked fresh but because they believed that this particular new form was consonant with an ideology to which they now subscribed. They accepted the notion—never mind how firmly based the logic—that this particular *idea* had a connection to this particular *shape*, and that in building to that shape, they could bring their built world into consonance with their mental world.

The agency by which the connection between ideas and shape is often made is *convention*: we come to believe—whether consciously or unconsciously—that *this* form means *this* idea. Such tacit agreements are either made in our own age or adopted from an earlier age, in whole or in part. There is always some empirical evidence to lend plausibility to the connection, but the amount of evidence needed to make the connection plausible varies with the form and with the credulity of the people believing in the convention.

The authors of *American Architecture*, however, pay little attention to this idea of meaning-by-convention. As a result, they lapse into the modernist ideology they avoid elsewhere. According to modernist thought, such conventional arrangements were invalid. Instead, meaning and form had to have a universal, empirically established connection. The modernists saw it as their duty to expose the arbitrary, nonempirical quality of such conventions of meaning, not just those of our time but of other times as well. Joining the modernists in denying the power of conventions and challenging their explanation of a *Zeitgeist* impelling historical change, the authors are left with no alternative, postmodernist account of architectural history. What remains is a drama in which all the action is shown but none of the motivation. The characters look capricious or willful or downright silly; and the drama they enact seems meaningless.

What would a history cognizant of ideology be like? Such a history would not look at early American architecture as a mechanical adaptation of familiar European forms to new material conditions; instead it would look at the new ways of thinking and living that were evolving here—which the growing field of family history is now delineating—and connect them with changes in the forms of houses.

WITH THE conscious creation of a new nation came a concern with defining "Americanness." In architecture, as in other fields of inquiry, the problem was to define Americanness not just out of what we found here, but out of our consciousness of ourselves as a new people. How did architecture respond to that desire? How did buildings attempt to encompass that ideology? How did thoughtful people convince themselves that such buildings were indeed consonant with that newly minted Americanness?

The often mentioned column capitals formed of tobacco leaves or cornstalks

are examples of material, pragmatic Americanness. Later in the 19th century, public buildings like the Boston Public Library were being erected. That library, the authors tell us, embodies a "literate humanism" that "best expresses America's cultural aspirations of the time." The assertion is undeniably true, and, fortunately, there is plenty of printed evidence about how the connection was to have been made. In contemporary accounts and retrospective analyses, writers of the 19th and early 20th centuries (including architects) tell us how a conscious iconographic program shaped the whole building, from its overall form and organization, through its mural decorations, down to its details and door handles. No less than in a cathedral, every element that could "express" was consciously shaped so that, should anyone care to speculate about "what that thing might mean," the connection he would likely make would reveal a piece of the ideology the library endorsed.

Circling the cloisterlike center courtyard, a viewer might have connected this library with the medieval church and the way the church safeguarded Western knowledge. To the more learned, the building's facade would have suggested the Bibliotheque Ste.


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PHOTOGRAPH OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, CHARLOTTESVILLE. ROTUNDA, FROM WEST. PRINTING SERVICES, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

Geneviève in Paris, an exemplary library —whose facade bore inscriptions of the names of the authors whose books were encased inside. But even for the untutored, the long, majestic climb to the Boston library's vaulted reading room would have told of the esteem in which the act of reading was held.

Yet these are not the thoughts that come into our heads today when we experience buildings like the Boston library. For us, the idea of speculating about a building's meaning is a dead letter. There is no shared, public vocabulary with which we can symbolize architectural meaning to ourselves. Even if there were, our public life is so contentious that anything truly spoken about a building would be certain to offend some powerful or vocal group.

Yet in 1948, when the parishioners of St. Thomas Church in New York reconstructed their vestibule as a memorial to the dead of World War II, they had worked into the four corners of the room representations of earth, air, fire, and water—the four elements of ancient physics. To all who care to look, that is a reminder of modern physics' role in that conflict, and a call to the Christian to consider his stance before Hiroshima. This is hardly the deracinated, out-of-touch iconography of classical maidens representing art, nor is it the easy exploitation of known symbols and forms for their associative or decorative effect. This is iconography attempting to work as it once worked: to suggest connections that hadn't occurred to us, and—in the best cases—to challenge us to examine our beliefs.

Iconography need not rely only on symbols. A plan can be an icon too. The now standard plan of the suburban house—three bedrooms off a corridor —tells of our belief about children's relationship to their parents, the privileges of privacy we accord them, and their unimpeded access to the common goods of the house (the living room and kitchen). In a more authoritarian society, the children might have to pass through the parent's room to reach theirs—or at least symbolically to pass by their door. Neither happens in the typical suburban house-plan.

But the most powerful plans-as-icons are the ones consciously conceived by a mind sure of its intentions. Such a plan is Thomas Jefferson's for the University of Virginia. Each of ten classical pavilions housed a professor and the classroom in which he taught his discipline. The pavilions are spaced out in two rows of five each, facing the open lawn, and between them stretch the cells of the student rooms. The two rows thus formed are linked at one end to form a deep U; and atop the link, looking down the length of the U, stands the Rotunda, a half-size Pantheon housing the library. Whiffen and Koeper look at the lawn's plan and remark upon "the clarity with which the hierarchy of functions is given physical expression."

But the fact that they look at the plan and see only the expression of a functional hierarchy bespeaks the extent to which they, like the rest of us, have ceased to look for ideological statements in our buildings. It shows how uncritically we subscribe to the modernist position that a building should be entirely a physical expression of a hierarchy of functions. For the lawn is one of the clearest examples we Americans have produced of mapping an ideology —in this case, Thomas Jefferson's philosophy of education—into three dimensions. Here we see the Rotunda, the repository of the knowledge of all the disciplines, presiding over its constituent parts, the pavilions housing the individual disciplines, each discipline

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unique but co-equal with all the others; and between the pavilions, linked to them in a relationship of dependence, the cells of the students—undifferentiated, each student the equal of every other.

This is not the usual way we read the lawn. Usually we just let its physical beauty and its assured serenity wash over us. But in its explicitness, the lawn is a powerful icon, and like the four elements at St. Thomas, it can challenge us to examine our beliefs. To what extent do we really accord primacy to the storage of knowledge (the library) over its production (the professors' residences/ offices) or its dissemination (the classrooms)? We certainly see students as equal before the law, but to what extent do we see them as indistinguishable, interchangeable? And to what extent do we rank them, as a group, below professors?

The best of past architecture asks us to confront questions like these, asks us to examine our public ideologies. Not, of course, every ideology; but to the extent that such ideologies are the province of institutions, architecture can embody them in the buildings it erects to house those institutions. That has been one of the central roles of architecture through history: to hold up before us a focused image of the role an institution plays in our lives, the nature of that institution and the character of its works.

We have largely forgotten that buildings can do that. We expect a corporate headquarters, for example, to give us an impression of sumptuousness or power or state-of-the-art modernity. But to look for a statement about the nature of that corporation sounds peculiar to us.

The kind of history of architecture I have sketched would remind us that buildings once performed that task and could do so again. By alerting us to the possibility of searching after meaning in old buildings, such a history might awaken us to the challenge of reading old buildings. And once we accept that challenge, we might then be in a position to make architecture a living force in our lives. We might look at our best old buildings and see each of them as a coherent, complete statement about the role it once played in the life of its time—and not merely as a candy box of "never to be reproduced" moldings and ornaments to be plundered in an orgy of reuse.

Then, having seen that a building can be a coherent statement, we might demand that our architects produce publicly meaningful works. And we might hold them to that task, give them enough time to do it, and accord them

## From Bauhaus to Our House by Tom Wolfe

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 143 pp., $10.95)

Originally published in two installments in *Harper's*, Tom Wolfe's latest speculation on American social and cultural phenomena concerns the influence of the Bauhaus (the school of architecture and design that was founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar in 1919) on 20th-century American architecture. Architects and artists at the Bauhaus—among them such luminaries as Marcel Breuer, Josef Albers, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, Mies van der Rohe—devised an innovative vocabulary of design that was based upon new materials, new structural methods, new methods of production. According to Wolfe, however, their collective legacy was nothing more than "the glass box" (a pejorative term for such fine buildings as Gordon Bunshaft's Lever House in New York as well as its poor imitations) and "worker housing" (a pejorative term for everything from Minoru Yamasaki's ill-conceived and ill-fated Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis to luxury highrises on Fifth Avenue). Further, he suggests that the legacy was far too eagerly embraced by American architects, the least appropriate legatees of a European idiom during what was the "American century."

In fact, Wolfe's premise is that Americans for the last 50 years have commissioned and lived and worked in buildings that they do not like, do not understand, do not feel comfortable in, and usually try to fight against after the fact (with discordant decorating schemes). Americans in a position to commission the architecture of their choice, he says, no longer order up a French château as Alice Gwynne Vanderbilt was able to do in the good old days (a practice Gropius called "applied archaeology"), but instead are intimidated into accepting whatever their architects wish to design. What they wish to design, over and over again, is variations of the "glass box" and "worker housing."

Wolfe's major accusation is that American architects became so mired in their "colonial complex" that they not only imitated the designs of the Europeans they admired, but adopted their 20th-century "compound mentality" as well—a mentality Wolfe describes as one that removes art from the masses and cloisters it among the chosen, who then design only for each other.

A first reading of *From Bauhaus to Our House* can be entertaining and amusing (the title, for a start, is good). Wolfe serves up a fair number of snappy anecdotes and is on target about contemporary architects who cannot break out of the imitative straitjacket and about infighting among architectural factions. A second reading, however, makes the glib accusations, the rhetorical questions, and the serial exclamation points ("Clerisy! The compound! The codes! The new arcana!") seem tedious indeed. Lacking the quantity of information in much of his work—*The Right Stuff*, for example—*From Bauhaus to Our House* is too light a concoction to be taken seriously. Wolfe spins a superficial argument, choosing to ignore or distort history as it suits his purposes, and failing to see the difference between imitation of style and creative application of ideas. And as daylight disappears from Madison Avenue and as clusters of buildings with reflective glass skins mirror nothing but each other, it is worse than unfortunate that Mr. Wolfe did not take a more serious look at contemporary American architecture.

**ELLEN POSNER**

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honor when they accomplish it. And finally, once our architects were able again to offer institutions a way of making their nature public, we might come to know the extent to which modern architecture has served more than just the aesthetic needs of our institutions. We know that the mute, sleek corporate style offers an institution respectability and chic at an economical price, but that very muteness also offers a tempting route around the tasks of self-examination and self-revelation. How has the easy requirement of "building modern" enabled institutions to delude themselves as to their true nature and role in society? Worse, to what extent has the continuing absence of an architecture of public discourse served the ends of institutions bent on concealing their true nature from us?

Near the end of their book, the authors point to Eero Saarinen's Dulles Airport as an exuberant expression of the role that air travel plays in our lives and psyches. And they tell us that Saarinen believed that "public architecture should express the nature of its special purpose in our lives," that architecture for an institution should hold up to us a focused image of the role that institution plays in our lives At Dulles and again at the T.W.A. Terminal in New York, Saarinen was able to do that, to express the idea of flight in a direct and sensuous way. But Saarinen also designed the CBS Headquarters in Manhattan. The question has to arise: if T.W.A. "means" flight, then what does CBS "mean"? At CBS Saarinen had to move out of the clean realm of bodily and psychic sensations and face the messy questions of ideology. In response he produced a totally blank shaft of dark glass and black granite, perhaps the ultimate impenetrable corporate black box—his statement about the nature of corporate and institutional power. We can only read the building that way if we have studied the past, which teaches us to look for architectural meaning in the buildings rising around us in the present.

**WILLIAM HUBBARD**

William Hubbard is a practicing architect in Richmond, Virginia, and the author of *Complicity and Conviction: Steps Toward an Architecture of Convention* (M.I.T. Press).

# BOOKS AS A BETTER KIND OF LIFE

## Van Wyck Brooks: A Writer's Life by Raymond Nelson

(Dutton, 332 pp., $21.75)

When, on the eve of Hitler's war, I began a book on modern American writing, Van Wyck Brooks's influence on the formation of that literature was such a powerful presence in my mind that it still vaguely surprises me to see how little he now matters. Brooks became famous with *America's Coming of Age* (1915), which defined the conflict between a commercial civilization and what, on the eve of "Mr. Wilson's War," seemed to be our insurgent literary tradition. Brooks was the first to sum up the division in our literature itself between highbrow and lowbrow, the too remote and the too pragmatic, as a national weakness.

As a "literary radical" (Brooks's phrase for his lamented friend Randolph Bourne), I was indulgent toward Brooks's Victorian belief that the great writer should be the greatest force for change. I knew how much *America's Coming of Age* and other early polemics had inspired writers soon to be soured by fellow "progressive" Woodrow Wilson. But more than this, Brooks was the critic as writer, the man of letters, who like Ruskin, his first affinity (there would be all too many), had no need to write fiction in order to be "creative." Brooks was indeed to be all too creative. Nor did this literary artist need to invoke Carlyle, Hazlitt, Emerson, etc., in order to make the once obvious point that "criticism" in the largest sense is central to literature. Brooks was such an elegant, even patrician writer that long after he had ceased to be a model to me I could recall with pleasure the fighting tone of *America's Coming of Age*, the description of out-of-the-way New York in *Letters and Leadership*, "The Candidate for Gentility" chapter in *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, the portrait of John Quincy Adams in *The Flowering of New England*.

IT WAS IMPORTANT for me to think well of this splendid writer and his old-fashioned American trust in the continued progress of mankind. Even before we had got through Hitler's war, the significant critics were virtually all in the universities, freshmen were learning to read anything and everything by the formula of Brooks (Cleanth) and Warren. Van Wyck, like Mencken before him and Edmund Wilson after him, wrote for magazines, started fights, guided a large audience to unexpected books and issues. Some of the new professor-critics expected agreement from the increasingly uninformed captive audience in the classroom. (And very solemn they could be about this.) You could not argue with critics whose favorite word of derogation was "heresy." I shall never forget my shock when I read Randall Jarrell's ultimate praise for that tendentious work, Robert Penn Warren's *Brother to Dragons*, ". . . man, when you knock his chains off, sets up the death camps."

The influence of the "new critics," despite their supposedly exclusive concentration on text alone, was conservative and neo-orthodox because its preferred examples for analysis came from "difficult" modernists. Eliot and Pound and Joyce were becoming our century's classics, and though they never really agreed about fundamental social matters, their common disdain for the present could not be separated from their creative force.

Brooks himself in these crucial years of depression and war was busily working toward what he honestly thought was a "usable past." He had formulated the phrase in his early radical days when, like so many writers around THE NEW REPUBLIC, he felt that the "beloved community" of his dreams must resolve the conflict between America and its writers. Now, recovering from a long nervous breakdown occasioned by his own conflicts between family and independence (plus the guilt he felt about

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his inadequate book on Henry James), he was publishing *The Flowering of New England, New England: Indian Summer, The World of Washington Irving, The Times of Melville and Whitman*. He would end his ambitious *Makers and Finders* series with a last volume on his own early period, *The Confident Years*, where he at last found a subtitle, "A History of the Writer in America."

To anyone with any feeling for the American past, especially after current disillusionments had divided us from so much of the *literary* republic that was Brooks's enduring vision of America, these books offered great charm and noble feeling. They were the work of a remarkable historical writer and impressionist whose imagination, odd as it may seem, was more like Walter Pater on Greece, Ruskin on Venice, than anything crudely native to America. Brooks seemed to have read all the American books; with the sensitive bookman's gift for appropriating everything about a writer into his own text, he created a totally personal redaction of history. It was not a re-establishment of an American tradition, for there was no real tradition in Brooks's coupling of Jefferson with John Quincy Adams, Noah Webster with the learned blacksmith Elihu Burritt.

The writing was lovely, the many "pictures" positively idyllic at times. But whatever else all this added up to in a period when Americans were more and more ignorant of their past, it was not a "usable" past. After all, our most celebrated literary symbol, Huck Finn, had straightforwardly declared, "I don't take no stock in dead people." Traditionalist critics had for obvious reasons appealed to the Middle Ages (Henry Adams), to the century of Donne (T. S. Eliot). But Brooks seemed to have fled from T. S. Eliot himself (whom he hated so hysterically that he said in Edmund Wilson's hearing that he hoped Eliot would die in agony) to exactly those 19th-century worthies whom in *America's Coming of Age* he had portrayed as prisoners of their commercial background, so frustrated that they blighted the life around them.

While this reversal was acceptable (the study of American literature had become a minor industry), Brooks's identification of literary history with the American mainstream was unthinking. Brooks, who did not easily enjoy poetry, had a rhetorical way of making Whitman his central emblem, but you could not tell from Brooks whether the Whitman he was celebrating was actually a poet or just the hallowed name that Whitman had been to moony idealists on *The Seven Arts* like James Oppenheim and Waldo Frank. There was just too much evocation of authors' names, place names, flowers and shrubs; authority seemed to consist in quotations rather than in Brooks's own reasoning.

PHOTOGRAPH OF VAN WYCK BROOKS

Brooks's failure to separate book from author, to correlate lives with the real forces in American history, pointed up the extraordinary personal tangles and neurotic complications created by his need to make literature a better kind of life. Raymond Nelson documents in this excellent, sympathetic, unfailingly intelligent account of Brooks's life what admirers have long suspected. Brooks identified himself so completely with certain writers that, as Nelson well says, Brooks became a character in their works. And in the same unreasoning way he converted literary opponents into "enemies" (Brooks was too pure-minded to call them rivals), Brooks was capable of hating Joyce and Proust because admirers of the hated Eliot tended to lump them together. It never occurred to Brooks that Proust too had been deeply influenced by Ruskin.

Yet the actual Van Wyck Brooks was a shy, terribly proper, and timid gentleman. Out of respect for his New England authors, he sat down each morning to write in a tie, waistcoat, and jacket. Even among bookish critics he was startling in the degree to which his whole life was spent absorbing literature and being absorbed by it. He replaced the actual world with the lives of the writers he loved. It is not too much to say that he lived a life of fantasy, drugged by books, that had to collapse around him.

As Mr. Nelson says, there was a "double life." Brooks's own account was that he came from a "Wall Street suburb" (Plainfield) in the "unloved state of New Jersey." His father was timid, unassertive, insignificant in "the Street." The mother was strong, shallow, a picturesque philistine, contemptuous of Van Wyck's interest in the arts. A brother who wrote poetry but joined his mother in derogation of Van Wyck eventually threw himself in front of a train. Van Wyck was such an old-fashioned literary gent, and valued his independence so much, that when he was an editorial slave at the Century Company for $30 a week he was afraid of "making too much money." But the strain of having to support a wife and two sons forced Van Wyck to translate too many books from the French, take too many editorial jobs. For six years, 1925-1931, he had a prolonged breakdown, was near psychotic and suicidal at times. One reason for his self-hatred is that he knew, with his abnormal disposition to take sides for and against writers, that he had not done justice to the subject in *The Pilgrimage of Henry James*. James was such a symbol to Brooks that he ridiculously suggested that James's expatriation had spoiled his early promise. Without "Europe" as subject, which he actually knew better than he did his own country, James would have been a minor figure.

His biographer, though he misses nothing of Brooks's weakness, seems unable to call Brooks's lack of reasoning power by that name. Whether the extreme emotional partisanship that Brooks got himself into with writers kept him from using his mind freely, or


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whether Brooks was a far more accomplished artist and dreamer than he was a thinker, the fact remains that Brooks's ideas were never original, and that his famous *Makers and Finders* series shows a lack of intellectual muscle. T. S. Eliot once said that a critic must be *very* intelligent. Van Wyck Brooks did not meet that requirement. What makes the case historically interesting is that literature as fantasy no longer seems to exert its power as it did on Van Wyck Brooks.

**ALFRED KAZIN**

Alfred Kazin is writing a book on American writers from Emerson to Eliot. His *The Inmost Leaf* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) and *Starting Out In The Thirties* (Vintage) are now available in paperback.

# YEARS OF SHAME

## Vichy France and the Jews
## by Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton

(Basic, 432 pp., $20.95)

Reading this somber and powerful book, I was reminded that I once heard David Ben-Gurion declare the French to be the most anti-Semitic nation on earth. He was responding to General de Gaulle's observation that the Jews were an elitist domineering people. But Ben-Gurion's larger point was that whereas Nazi and Soviet anti-Semitism was ideologically inspired, the French consented to it for profit, for the sake of what they conceived to be self-interest.

Few Frenchmen have been prepared to scrutinize their country's record on the matter, which was at its most abysmal under the Vichy regime. Thus the comforting and utterly false notion that Vichy persecuted Jews only under German pressure has prevailed. In fact, as this book carefully and inexorably demonstrates, the opposite was true: the Vichy regime first deprived Jews of legal protection and then washed its hands of their fate.

Reactions to the deportation and murder of Jews varied among the countries of Nazi Europe. During the summer of 1942, Vichy delivered Jews to their death from areas not directly subject to German military control; Bulgaria was the only other country in the war to do anything so infamous, and even Bulgaria mostly protected its native-born Jews. French apologists for Vichy, from Marshal Pétain and his deputy Pierre Laval downward, have always argued that collaboration shielded the population from the worst Nazi excesses, and was therefore justified. If foreign-born Jews had to be sacrificed, it was only in order to buy time for native French Jews. Never mind the inhumanity, this view was always suspect on account of its temporizing and self-serving nature, which this book exposes once and for all. Without Vichy measures, Marrus and Paxton show, the Holocaust would have been that much less dreadful.

During the years before the war, the influx to France of exiles and refugees seeking shelter from the coming storm—most but not all of them Jews—inflamed deep indigenous anti-Semitism. After the military disaster of May 1940, these immigrants were perceived both as the symbol and the cause of the defeat, the most convenient of scapegoats. Hardly had the fatal armistice been signed that summer and Marshal Pétain installed as head of the Vichy regime, than preliminary anti-Jewish measures were passed. Jews were obliged to register; they were purged from the professions and from business, they lost rights to citizenship and nationality—all gestures of accommodation to the Germans who had as yet made no such demands themselves. In fact the Germans had driven a few thousand Jews from areas such as Alsace-Lorraine into France. Far from offering protection, Vichy was relieved when eventually the Germans reversed their decisions and took these people back again, to kill them.

Confusions of this kind had ceased by mid-1941, when Nazi policy was clarified. The Nazis adopted the Final Solution early in 1942, and in May of that year SS General Karl Oberg arrived in Paris to command the available SS and Gestapo forces. The Germans could do as they liked in France, Oberg wrote to his immediate superior, Heinrich Himmler, so long as they had the personnel. The requisite trained killers were busy in the east, however, and Oberg had less than 3,000 members of the SS or Gestapo at his disposal. Thus the Germans made use of a 1940 French census of Jews, French files, and the machinery of persecution lately installed by Vichy. Oberg and René Bousquet, the Vichy official who had been appointed *secrétaire général* of the police in Paris, agreed between them that although the French police were to remain nominally independent, in practice they would comply unconditionally with German demands.

So it came about that the French themselves administered Drancy, the camp in the Paris suburbs where Jews were collected before being dispatched to Auschwitz. French gendarmes marched the Jews to the trains and sealed them into the cattle wagons. And the days of terror, such as the *Grande Rafle* of July 16, 1942, when 27,388 Jews were selected from the French census files for arrest in Paris, were the exclusive work of the French police. This


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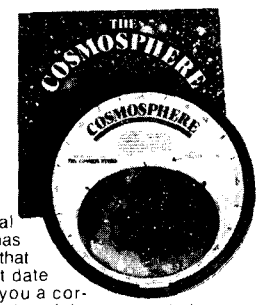


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remained the procedure until the very end, for although the Germans took over the running of Drancy in 1944, they had fewer and fewer men to spare for the details of the murder program. According to the minimum estimate made from transport lists, 75,721 Jews, roughly half French-born and half foreign-born, were deported to the death camps. A handful returned.

Oberg and his men never needed to threaten "Polandization" to get results from the French. On the contrary, they were gratified that they had only to follow up on Vichy preparations, and their reports to Berlin regularly contained praise for French cooperation. At his trial after the war, Oberg's deputy, Helmut Knochen, declared that "we found no difficulty with the Vichy government in implementing Jewish policy."

Paxton and Marrus offer a conclusive account of the reasons for French collaboration. Pétain and Laval may have been cynically indifferent to what happened to Jews, but many of their associates were anti-Semites in the classical Dreyfus-affair mold. Anti-Semitism with a French rather than a German accent was defended with nationalistic pride as a proper assertion of French authority in a properly French sphere. Thus expropriated Jewish property might be more advantageously "Aryanized" into French, instead of German, hands.

The institutionalization of anti-Semitism began in 1941, when the Vichy government established the *Commissariat-général aux questions juives*, or C.G.Q.J., as an integral part of its administration. Equipped with special police forces and a massive budget, the C.G.Q.J. became a prime instrument of collaboration with the Nazis. The first head of the C.G.Q.J., Xavier Vallat, was a former Catholic deputy, an anti-Semite of long standing. A French nationalist since World War I, he had reservations about the Germans, and perhaps, as the authors suggest, he built up the C.G.Q.J. in the sincere belief that a French structure of persecution could remain parallel to the German one, but separate. If so, he was a dupe. When the moment was at hand to implement the Final Solution, the Germans had only to insist on the replacement of Vallat by someone who had been in their pay for years, Darquier de Pellepoix. Though Darquier preferred bluster to efficiency and so proved something of a disappointment to Oberg, nonetheless the C.G.Q.J. by then was smoothly adapted into the Nazi scheme. Vichy had served its purpose. The ends of French and German persecution had coincided. (Darquier, alive and well in Spain, recently assured a French interviewer that he would do it all again if he could. René Bousquet, alive and well in Paris, was sentenced after the war for collaboration, and almost simultaneously reprieved for "resistance," on the grounds that he had kept the French police distinct from the German—a confusion of judgment characteristic of the times. Knochen, alive and well in the town of Offenbach, at least has served several years of a prison sentence.)

VICHY presented treason and defeatism as the patriotic course, and the deception was welcomed by virtually the entire population. This book's indictment falls on the average Frenchman who, like his counterpart in Germany, handed his conscience over to the state. The René Bousquets and the gendarmes and the anti-Jewish police and the thousands of "Aryanizing" bureaucrats and the numberless profiteers each contributed in his way to putting French Jews at the mercy of mass-murderers. Accomplices like these, some active and some passive, were indispensable to the Germans, who otherwise never could have mobilized the manpower to impose the Final Solution upon France.

Did submission after 1940 have to be so unconditional? France was the first

## THE TRANSFORMATION

Dissonant music of the night.
Two o'clock. The ancient dogs cry.
Seventeeen year old Harry homing from a party
hauls a radio that sounds the harsh tones of the young.
Joseph soughing, sighing on the couch twists in his sleep.
Poor Joseph sleeps off who knows what.
But I am heedless, for tonight
I was warmed by my father's touch.
I want to tell you how it was.
After Bartók at the symphony
Renée and I found high in the sky a good spot and talked
out of our growing, friendly love
far above the buildings shining attractive at night
in Waikiki: Suddenly a strangely dressed lady
(I can't tell you where she came from)
stopped at our small table and sought to take our picture.
Renée and I first said no to her, then by some quirk
or other I simply ran after.
We moved our black rattan chairs close together, smiled and
twice we let her flash our picture.
We had another drink, chatted
and with a slight edge of expectation we waited.
After an undetermined time
the mythical lady returned
and we were amazed to find quite fabulous photos!
Renée was radiant in a dress now trimmed with stars,
and as for me I had lost weight
and showed the true bones of my face.
For the first time I knew I looked like my father's son.
I am fifty-eight. Let those dogs
of the moon bay again tonight,
the young stage their noisy parties
and Joseph sleep his obscure sleep.
I am pleased because I see I have my father's face.

JOHN LOGAN


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industrial democracy ever to experience the shock of defeat and occupation by a foreign totalitarian power. In retrospect, that may have been the turning point when vitality ebbed from the moral values of Europe. For what arms had lost, arms surely could have retrieved—had the will existed in France, had there been no appeasement, had liberty retained its meaning. Behind the Vichy experience Paxton and Marrus describe so insightfully is a psychopolitical collapse in the face of totalitarian rule; moral vitality in Europe has not yet been fully restored.

**DAVID PRYCE-JONES**

David Pryce-Jones is the author of *Paris and the Third Reich: A History of the German Occupation*, published last month by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

# AN EXPERIENCED VICTIM

## Played Out: The Jean Seberg Story by David Richards

(Random House, 256 pp., $13.95)

She came from God-fearing Swedish-American stock, firmly planted in the middle of Iowa. Fresh from high school, she edged out 18,000 other candidates for the honor of starring in *St. Joan*, and became, on its release, the laughing stock of movie critics the world over. A few years later, she resurfaced incongruously as the leading star of the French New Wave. She married a French writer, tried and failed to sustain a career in Hollywood, and became politically, financially, and sexually involved with the Black Panthers. After a pregnancy and miscarriage that aroused the interest of the F.B.I., she spent much of the 1970s commuting between mental institutions and bars, and was found dead at the age of 40, her barbituate-filled body decomposing in the back seat of a Renault parked on a Paris street.

Jean Seberg's life gives meaning to the phrase "been through some changes." This is one of those personal journeys that says something basic about a people and a time, and what it says is as depressing as all get-out. A reader of David Richards's sympathetic but discerning biography could almost be driven to one of those "bizarre cocktails" of liquor and pills which, in the last years of her life, were a Seberg favorite.

Who—or what—did her in? After her death, Romain Gary, Seberg's ex-husband, called a press conference and announced that the F.B.I. had murdered her. The murder weapon, as he reconstructed it, was a rumor—the rumor that she had become pregnant by a Black Panther in 1970. The F.B.I. had fed this story to the press, Gary said, and it had provoked her miscarriage, which had in turn left her so distraught that suicide attempts would become a gruesome, almost annual ritual on future anniversaries of the event.

Obviously, the story took its toll. Seberg brought her child's two-month-premature body back to Marshalltown, Iowa, to be displayed in an open coffin and buried in "the fourth most beautiful cemetery in the world." She wanted everyone to know her baby had been white.

Richards confirms that F.B.I. agents, after jumping to an erroneous conclusion about the paternity of Seberg's child from a tapped phone call, suggested circulating this anonymous message to Hollywood gossip columnists: ". . . I was in Paris last week and ran into Jean Seberg, who was heavy with baby. I thought she and Romaine [*sic*] had gotten together again, but she confided that the child belonged to [Panther official, name deleted]. The dear girl is getting around!"

F.B.I. headquarters approved the idea, but suggested a delay so their Panther wiretap wouldn't be jeopardized. Years later, investigating itself, the bureau concluded that the rumor had never been passed on. But two weeks after the scheme was hatched, *Los Angeles Times* columnist Joyce Haber ran a so-called "blind item" about "Miss A" who

> came to Hollywood some years ago with the tantalizing flavor of a basket of fresh-picked berries. The critics picked at her movie debut, and in time, a handsome European picked her for his wife. . . . And now, according to all those really 'in' international sources, Topic A is the baby Miss A is expecting, and its father. Papa's said to be a rather prominent Black Panther.

Richards concludes, for whatever lingering genealogical interest the question holds, that the father was a revolutionary Mexican student Seberg had met while shooting a movie called *Macho Callahan*. She had affairs with two black radicals, however, and was a generous helper and a fierce defender of the Panthers. So why was she so frazzled by the paternity rumor? As Gary explained it, the charge carried the hint that her politics had been defined by "sexual penchants." (Actually, her sexual penchants seem to have been diverse enough to permit almost any sort of politics.)

Whether the F.B.I. did or didn't feed the story to Joyce Haber is hard to determine, since it came to her via then city editor Bill Thomas—with his notation that it had hailed from "a pretty good source." Thomas would tell Richards only that he probably heard the tale from

> someone on the police beat. I used to get fifteen or so tips like that a week—that's a rough guess. It sounded kind of cockamamie to me. . . . But it's the sort of stuff that, when it comes over your desk, you pass it along.

Now that the F.B.I. had acknowledged—and forsworn—the dirty tricks perpetrated under the Cointelpro banner in the 1960s, perhaps we needn't go back and trace every last speck of dirt. Anyone with the will to find culprits in the Seberg affair, however, could just as easily look into the eager role played by the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, and other publications that, unlike the F.B.I., have never been called to account. One question that comes to mind: if an F.B.I. official tried to excuse a slander with an explanation as vague as Thomas's, what would the newspapers say? And why did something a columnist had as a secondhand tip from an unknown party get attributed to "all those really 'in' international sources?"

But these are footnotes. Whatever the F.B.I. or the press did to injure Jean Seberg, Richards presents grim evi-



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dence that she was, by then, an experienced victim. Suicide threats, in fact, had been part of her repertoire as far back as *Bonjour Tristesse*, her second film.

Her disintegration began with *St. Joan*. "She didn't know much about phrasing, climax, all the things the part needed," Sir John Gielgud told Richards. Gielgud played the Earl of Warwick, and later summed up Seberg's career with the comment that "she'd learned to be a star before she became an actress." Otto Preminger apparently tried to terrorize Seberg into giving the performance he wanted—one that, in its utter innocence, would transcend her limited training as an actress. The performance that made it to the screen was merely terror-stricken. And it didn't help that she actually caught fire in the first attempt to film her burning at the stake. After that experience, the burning was filmed with dummies and mirrors. (That was how some of her later Hollywood performances seemed to have been filmed.)

"I didn't help her to understand the part [of Joan]," Preminger said years later, ". . . and I have nobody to blame but myself." As for rumors of an affair with Seberg, he gave a denial with unusual sweep. "I never have any romantic involvement with any actress while I'm working with her," he said. "Maybe much later. Maybe before. But never during the film. This is one of my very real principles and I have very few real principles."

*Bonjour Tristesse* brought Seberg to France, and the French salvaged a career for her. Jean Luc Godard's *Breathless* led to a string of roles as the innocent but open-minded American in Paris—"so free that she has no sense of responsibility or guilt," as Pauline Kael put it. True to the type, Seberg dissolved a flighty first marriage and became involved with Gary, who would be her master as well as husband, escorting her through the works of Balzac, Flaubert, Stendahl, and Dostoevsky. With Gary, she would be introduced, in the flesh, to the likes of André Malraux and John and Robert Kennedy.

This is such a mammoth and monstrous story that no biography could hope to explore every corner of it. If anything, Richards has been too even-handed in his choices—introducing us to more characters and episodes than we can follow, while not getting deeply enough into such key areas of her life as her childhood or her marriage to Gary. But some of these choices were imposed by factors beyond the author's control. If the number and quality of quotes are a reliable guide, several principal figures in the Seberg story either declined to cooperate or had curiously little to say. Gary was, in a sense, doubly uncooperative—not only refusing to be interviewed, but then compounding the scope of Richards's assignment by committing suicide himself.

Just the same, *Played Out* is one of the rare show-business biographies that gets beyond the clichés and stereotypes. The author's curiosity and common sense lead to an unusually credible picture of what stardom was like for a hometown girl who made good (to her lasting regret). The political side of the tale is graced by a rare absence of preconceptions, and a willingness to look for the complexities of people who were caught up in extreme foolishness. And amid all the depressing details, there are even, now and again, touches of grim humor. In 1963, Seberg and Gary were asked to dinner at the White House. Jack Kennedy fired off a machine gun round of questions about de Gaulle, Jean Paul Belmondo, and moviemaking. The first lady, for her part, took Seberg aside and counseled her not to marry her escort (who hadn't yet obtained his divorce from English novelist Lesley Blanch)—because "they lose all interest in you once you do."

**JAMES LARDNER**

James Lardner is a theater critic for the *Washington Post*.

# A NOVEL OF DESPAIR AND REVOLUTION

## A Flag for Sunrise
## by Robert Stone

(Knopf, 439 pp., $13.95)

These days novels that explore the full range of human experience—the moral, political, emotional, and spiritual coordinates of our condition—are rare. The novelist has become a specialist who works his little corner of perception, letting whole departments of life go by the boards. It is a failure of ambition and mind alike, and it would have shocked the 19th-century masters of the form, who took it as their duty to be vatic about every facet of life. Technical ability is concededly high among our novelists—so high that we are rarely prompted to look past the fictive surface of a work to the mind behind it. A writer was once said to have a message; he is now said to have a voice, the mere vehicle of a message. The intellectuals' fondness for Bellow, the long critical lenity toward Mailer, were vestiges of the old standard. These writers were going to save the novel from triviality. They were the keepers of the flame, and for some they still are. But that guttering torch should now be passed to Robert Stone, who, unlike Mailer and Bellow, is an artist first with the artist's magic knack of making ideas flesh.

Mr. Stone is 44, which must come under the category of good news. His first novel, *A Wilderness of Mirrors*, published in 1967, won a Faulkner Prize. His second, *Dog Soldiers*, won the National Book Award for fiction in 1974. *A Flag for Sunrise* is his third novel, and it too will win prizes. It seems destined to be one of the books that will justify our time before the bar of literary history.

*A Flag for Sunrise* is about revolution and the existential hungers behind political commitment—isolation, loneliness, despair; it is about moral compromise, about history. Through its resonant and representative characters, it mounts a powerful criticism of our life. It depicts us as without belief or hope at a moment in history when both these springs of life are fast becoming the spiritual capital of people we alienated in the days when our power was uncontested. The novel takes place in Central America, but several of the characters were in Vietnam, and our defeat there, and the fate of the people who relied on us, hangs over the novel like an evil spell: Americans are betrayers here, a people who cannot be relied


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on. We lost in Vietnam; our defeat was total. Robert Stone, in this novel and *Dog Soldiers*, is the novelist of our spiritual condition in the lee of that defeat.

Concerned as it is with gringos caught up in a Latin American revolution, *A Flag for Sunrise* will inevitably remind readers of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*. Unlike that 1904 novel, however, it is conventional in technique. The time scheme is straightforward, with the order of events coinciding exactly with the order of the telling. The novel does borrow a multicentered narrative frame from the movies, but aside from that it mainly exploits the devices of the 19th-century novel: secretly buried bodies, overheard conversations, intercepted messages, scenes in which one character prophesies the fate of another. These hoary devices are sometimes parodied or, if you will, deconstructed, by the novel itself. For example, when within pages of the end a character opines that he has learned a great deal from his adventures south of the border—as characters are supposed to do in the traditional novel—he is murdered straightaway. But more often the very familiarity of Mr. Stone's techniques provides an odd formal comfort in a novel whose content offers so little comfort of any kind.

THE PLOT is a fluid orchestration of the simultaneously unfolding destinies of three Americans: Frank Holliwell, a middle-aged anthropologist on a lecture trip to Central America; Sister Justin Feeney, an American nun helping to run a mission on the coast of Tecan; and Pablo Tabor, a pillhead deserter from the Coast Guard. For most of the novel they are in motion toward the moment when they meet at the mission. It comes late in the novel, and it is also the moment when Tecan erupts in revolution.

Frank Holliwell is an uncomfortably accurate rendering of a representative American type—the professor/journalist of declaredly liberal disposition who makes his living off the world's tragic datelines. Back in the States he has received an invitation to lecture in Compostela, Tecan's near neighbor; and when we meet him he is on his way from his Delaware home to a meeting in New York with an old friend named Marty Nolan. Nolan is a C.I.A. man with whom Holliwell grew up and to whom he supplied information in Vietnam. And Nolan is a minor triumph: to


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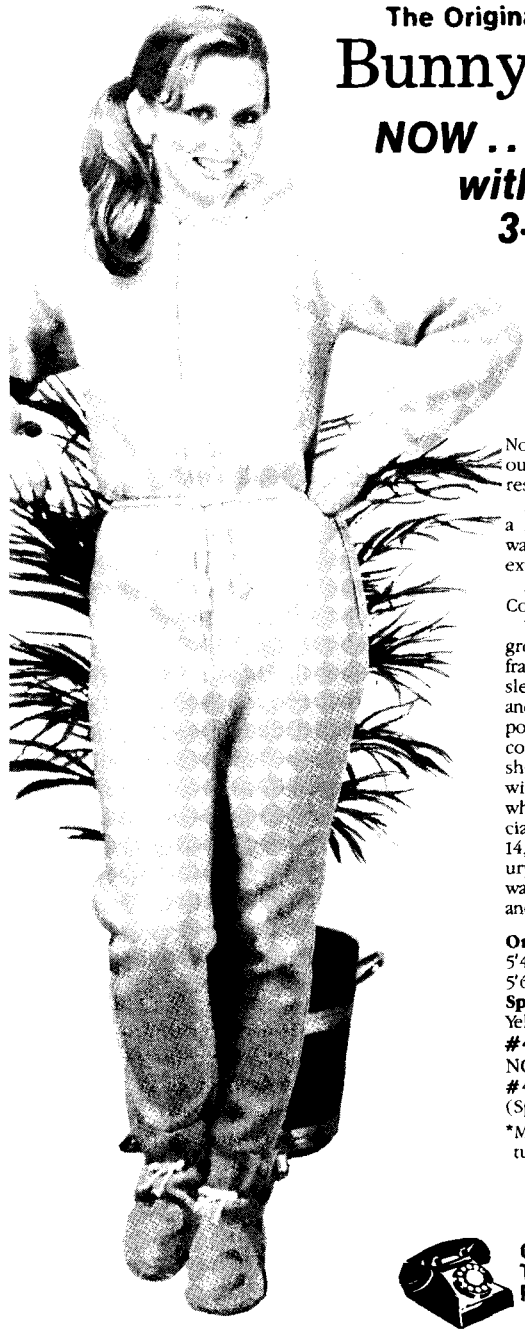

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compare this casual mephisto with the tedious spymasters Mailer has offered us over the years is to take one measure of Stone's large talent.

Nolan, all seductive charm and ironic banter, asks Holliwell to do him a favor while he is in Compostela. There is a Catholic mission down the coast in Tecan: would Holliwell go there and see what the priest and nun who run the place are up to? "The Tecanecan government suspects that the two of them are mixed up in subversive activities but it hasn't got a line on what and it doesn't want a hassle with the church." Nolan represents it as a mission of mercy: the Tecanecan government is notoriously brutal and these people may be in trouble. But Holliwell high-mindedly refuses, even pays for the meal, though later he grows curious about the people at the mission. Stone describes him as "really without beliefs, without hope, either for himself or for the world," and his politically involved co-religionists seem to him to embody the opposite of this—a life big with purpose, dedication, moral risk.

Arrived in Compostela, Holliwell finds that the man who invited him to give the lecture, an old friend, has changed utterly, been compromised like Holliwell himself: formerly a married, leftist activist, he is now a homosexual in the pay of the C.I.A. And this friend too asks Holliwell to visit the mission on the Tecan coast. Providentially two young Americans attached to the embassy in the Tecan capital turn up at Holliwell's lecture, and offer him a lift to Tecan. Like a sleepwalker, he accepts. Stone renders his passivity with convincing subtlety. Passivity is the key to Holliwell. It accounts for his drift toward the Tecan border. It is what makes him hunger to be a spectator of virtue and belief. And it is what blinds him to the fact that, in following his "moral fascination," he is also doing the bidding of the C.I.A. As the Marxists say, objectively he is on the other side from Sister Justin, with whom he rapidly falls in love and whom, in equivocal circumstances, he betrays.

The priest and the nun, Nolan tells Holliwell, are in "a state of social and spiritual crisis." And so they are. Father Egan, a drunken elderly priest who palpably owes more to Graham Greene than to nature, has been instructed by his order to close down the mission. He says his prayers irregularly. But Sister Justin is worse off: she has lost her faith entirely. When we first meet her, she is staring out to sea, meditating in this dark key:

> There was nothing. Only the sea, shadowed deeps, predatory eyes. Her heart beat quietly alone, its panicked quickening life a signal to the void, unanswered, uncomforted. It beat only for her, to no larger measure, a futile rounding of blood. The desire for death made her dizzy; it felt almost like joy.

No one comes to the mission; her six years there have been a waste. But then at a village fiesta Sister Justin meets a priest who is involved in plotting a rising of the peasants, and her spiritual crisis is put on the road to resolution as she watches this man beam down on the children of the village swirling before him on a carousel:

> They circled past his gaze, undersized, rickety, plenty of them dwarfed or scabrous, the sixty-five percent, the survivors of birth and infancy in Tecan—on their painted horses. He looked at them as no father she had ever seen looked at his own children. His grey eyes shone like theirs, with such fierce love that she trembled to see him.
>
> She felt then that all the companionship, all the moral recognition she had ever required from the universe reposed in the eyes of this priest.

She resolves to help the revolution, to make a leap of faith "toward man or history" as years before she had made it toward God. She will use the mission as a hospital on the day of the rising. And one thing more: she will keep the lights at the end of the mission dock burning to mark the way for the boat bringing arms to the coast. Pablo Tabor is on that boat, running guns to the Tecanecan revolutionaries.

Pablo is an ethnic version of Hicks in *Dog Soldiers*: the pill-popping ex-serviceman, a stranger to compassion, who is good with guns. All caged anger and paranoid intelligence, he might be Oswald, Bremer, the marine in the Texas tower. He hears voices when he is high, and at the beck of one of these he deserts the Coast Guard, abandons his family, and heads south.

WHILE STONE is unraveling these three skeins of his plot, he is also presenting a portentous picture of the political volcano that is Tecan. As in *Nostromo*, it is the increased exploitation following a discovery of precious ore that has pushed an already beset peasantry past the brink of endurance. In a daring break in point of view, Stone plunges us into a meeting of the revolutionaries as they plan the rising. In less skillful hands this scene could be an indigestible lump of exposition, but with his artist's touch Stone makes it live. He deftly brings out the idealism and moral ruthlessness of the revolutionaries, shows how critically they count on the post-Vietnam mood in the United States, and makes the characters of the two leaders of the revolution, an old Stalinist intellectual and the fierce young U.C.L.A.-trained future leader of Tecan, as memorable as Malraux's plotters in *Man's Fate*. Stone depicts Tecan in hellish hues, but life in the real Central America has lately outstripped his art in the department of the ghastly, softening some of the novel's shocks. Moreover, Stone's focus on his Americans tends to blur our perception of the environing tragedy of the Tecanese. To his credit, Stone tries to balance things by putting a stern lecture on American narcissism and moral flabbiness into


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the mouth of the Cuban C.I.A. operative who bullies Holliwell into betraying Sister Justin's involvement with the rising. It is a bitter view of us from a man who does our dirty work and it adds a further shade of complexity to Stone's remarkably objective political vision.

My description of *A Flag for Sunrise* may make it sound like a Hollywood epic of the 1950s: "The story of three Americans caught up in a Latin American revolution." But in fact the revolution is not merely technicolor background for *A Flag for Sunrise;* it is integrated into the spiritual lives of the characters. Pablo, in a drunken moment of cosmic clarity, asks, "What is the use of me?" It is a theological question, but in this novel history takes the place of God. It uses characters in ways that mock their subjective intentions. It is a ruthless force that won't allow a liberal like Holliwell, who "disapproves" of the American role in Tecan, to sit on the fence; a force that commands enough moral prestige to lure Sister Justin to her fatal commitment; a force, finally, that sweeps Pablo, a technically adept madman and so a caricature of the failure of American culture, down onto the Tecan coast with all the power and pitilessness of a hurricane. The novel ends with a shocking incident that may be read as an allegory of the historical future, and indeed the very last word in the book is history.

There are touches that strike me as wrong. Stone, lamentably, is obsessed with drugs and drink. *Wilderness of Mirrors* had lots of the drink; *Dog Soldiers* had too much of the drugs; and this novel sometimes staggers under excess doses of both. Holliwell's lecture, for example, is delivered in a drunken state and, like such scenes in life, it lacks focus and goes on interminably. Father Egan has what ought to have been an important conversation with Pablo but Egan is drunk and Pablo spaced on pills, so the scene rambles. Stone in these scenes is the victim of his mimetic skill. Sometimes Stone's demon of invention runs away with him. This is notably the case with the crazed Mennonite farmer who may have been killing children along the coast and whom Father Egan endeavors to reform with lectures in applied theology. The farmer adds a form of evil, the psychopathic, already amply embodied in Pedro, and weighs down the action at a late moment of its uncoiling. Conrad, Stone should recall, made it a principle of composition to speed up the pace as the end approached so that the reader would be pulled toward the last page. I also think that Stone is sometimes too clever for his own good. When Justin first sees Holliwell snorkeling in front of the mission, did she have to be reading *To the Finland Station*? Did *Death Wish* have to be playing in the village cinema on the evening she decides to help the revolution? It gives Stone an irony or two to savor, but is it likely that the rising would have triumphed in only a few days? Finally does Stone's gift for rendering smart talk play him false when he has one character tell another that he is offering him "the abridgment of hope" just as he stabs him? Is the echo of Gibbon intentional? Are we to think of Paul Fussell's gloss on this phrase as an early expression of the ironic modern attitude toward experience? Whatever its literary echoes, the phrase is simply not credible dialogue at that moment. None of these lapses, I must hasten to add, matter beside the power, thematic reach, and dramatized vision of the novel.

There is so much to admire in the writing. Stone is a master of dialect; in this novel he gets down the argots of blunt British adventurers and cruel Cuban mercenaries as well as the badinage of nervous Americans—makes the latter both funny and an emblem of the Americans' lack of seriousness, their historical weightlessness. His prose renders the underwater world with a fearful beauty in a diving scene; it handles subtle emotions like embarrassment; and it exfoliates in an extraordinarily evocative imagery. Thus Father Egan discovers a girl's corpse: "Then below, the freckled bridge of a nose and an eye—blue with a foliate iris—the whites gone dark, an eye so dull, so dead with sheer animal death that Egan received it as a spiritual shock." At the Miami airport, around the Latin American airlines, Holliwell notices that "the brightly lit corners began to reek of poverty and revenge." In Compostela he catches a glimpse of a garden: "In the rear of the building was a garden with fig trees, but it was enclosed by a wall like a prison." It is nothing less than an image for Latin America itself: a garden surrounded by a prison wall. On the drive to Tecan Holliwell is startled by the sight of the Tecan volcanoes:

> They rose solitary out of featureless tableland, bare, without harmony, unbeautiful enough to appear exactly what they were—burst excrescences on Tecan's pocked dusty hide. A geology lesson, he thought. They communicated a troubling sense of earth as nothing more than itself, of blind force and mortality.

The rhetoric is Conradian and, like Conrad's moralized geography, it both establishes a mood and propounds a philosophy. The mood is anxious, on the personal no less than the world-historical level. The philosophy is somber, an articulation of emptiness.

**JACK BEATTY**

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**TRB,** *from page 4*

at the same time that it ardently attacks government "interference." Big business is making a comeback.

The question now is whether Reagan isn't a little too far right for his own party, or at least for the Congress he must deal with until the midterm elections next year. I went to New York recently to listen to an academic group worry about the American system, and the tendency it has to deadlock under the separation of powers. The Founders thought they were making Congress the dominant force when they fashioned a Constitution deliberately designed to achieve stalemate, but the President shortly became the instrument of power. We are the only country, recalled former President Carter's counsel, Lloyd Cutler, where the legislature can appropriate more money than the President proposes, or where 34 senators in a legislative body of 535 can reject a foreign treaty.

Our heavy thinkers had various remedies, from strengthening political parties to a new constitutional convention (timed for the 200th anniversary of the first). There was no consensus. But problems are deepening, the globe is shrinking, people expect more from government. And the President is held responsible for what happens in Washington, though he lacks power to legislate or to execute his program. Ho-hum; last year only 54 percent of the voters voted.

I sighed the other day as I walked out of the polling place at the Horace Mann school. A teacher's notice on the wall read: "Only one person on the slide at a time. Wait your turn on the swings." How long can we wait?



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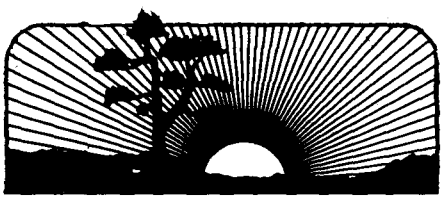

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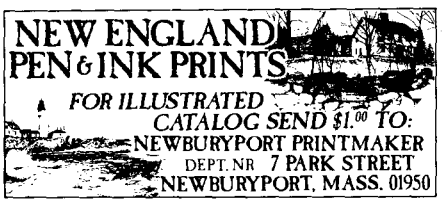


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# APPALACHIAN DIARIST

## *Hillbilly Heaven*

**WHILE DRIVING** through the declining coal town of Richwood, West Virginia, I saw a storefront window with "News Leader" written across it. On an impulse, I stopped the car, went inside, and asked the receptionist if I might look around. Upstairs, in what appeared to be the newsroom, I met a mild-looking older man in a green suit and frayed necktie. We chatted about the newspaper business while he cut copy, and eventually he introduced himself as Jim Comstock, the editor and founder of the *Nicholas County News Leader*. But before our conversation was over, I realized that Comstock is more than a grizzled newspaperman; he is a West Virginia cultural institution. Born and raised on a farm on Hinkle Mountain, West Virginia, Comstock is the man who welcomed Sharon Percy Rockefeller to "darkest Appalachia" with instructions on how to cook the foul-smelling weed called ramps, how to buy sassafras, and where to pick poke greens. It is said in an introduction to a selection of his writings that when *Saturday Review* referred to his work as "sophisticated," Comstock demanded a retraction. Back in 1960, when John F. Kennedy's religion was the crucial issue in West Virginia's presidential primary, Comstock offered up an editorial on "them roamin' Catholics" ("That's the worst kind because they roam around all the time, trying to get converts"), which argued that everyone has the right to sell his vote to whomever he pleases. Now 71, Comstock not only continues to edit the *News Leader*, but also writes a column called "The Comstock Load" for the *West Virginia Hillbilly* ("A paper for people who can't read, edited by an editor who can't edit"), which he also founded. In addition, he runs a bookstore. He seems to have edited and published most of the books on its shelves. The store is identified by blue letters painted on the window as the "Temporary Home of the Richard M. Nixon Library," a collection which consists of paperbacks about Watergate. "They'd take Benedict Arnold's papers if he offered them, wouldn't they?" said Comstock. "I put that in the paper, and one fellow wrote in to say I was defaming Benedict Arnold." The books Comstock has published generally are under the imprint of the West Virginia Heritage Foundation—pioneer diaries, documents, novels about West Virginia, and so on. But the good country editor is more than a historian "canning up" the past, as Comstock puts it. In his role as local intellectual and conduit of culture, Comstock also offers for sale material such as the collected poetry of Muriel Rukeyser.

**WATCHING COMSTOCK** work, and reading his papers, is probably as close as one can come to seeing what the 19th-century small-town American newspaper editor was like. How would Mark Twain of the Virginia City, Nevada, *Territorial Enterprise* have written about an Eastern reporter's visit to his town? Probably the same way Comstock reacted to articles on Appalachian poverty by reporters of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. The *Post* reporter was bamboozled by the locals: "They took him in, faster than a mail bag at a whistle stop." The *Times* correspondent fared no better: "Miss Marjorie Hunter of the *New York Times*, you remember, came down to Marlinton and wept into her typewriter over an octogenarian who lived in a floorless and bathless tarpaper shack, and how the poor man deserved something better. Miss Hunter, or anybody on a newspaper, should hope to live to be an octogenarian. And, too, Miss Hunter should have a look at that particular man's bank account. I know that for sure." Comstock is now worried that West Virginia Governor Jay Rockefeller is running for President. He blames that on *Washington Monthly* editor Charles Peters, who, Comstock said, "brought Jay in here when he saw what John Kennedy did: made this state a springboard to the presidency."

**A FEW DAYS** after leaving Richwood we pulled into hillbilly heaven: Gatlinburg, Tennessee, which sits at the western entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. That location might conjure up images of backwoods life, of mountain streams and stands of virgin timber. Galtinburg is anything but sylvan. It is a vacation spot, a strip of motels and tourist traps, an Appalachian version of Atlantic City—the major difference being that Gatlinburg is asleep by 11 p.m. Its streets are lined with what one would expect: video arcades, hamburger stands, and leather boutiques selling cowboy hats decorated with feathers and little Confederate flag pins that read "The South Will Rise Again." One storefront entrepreneur has set up business with a machine which resembles the highway patrolman's handheld radar and which measures the speed of moving objects. A barker stands on the sidewalk and invites passersby to pay a dollar to throw baseballs at a sheet featuring a caricature of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the caption "America Does'nt [sic] Forget." Patrons are told how fast they have hurled the horsehide at the Imam.

**I AM NOT SURE** which Gatlinburg has more of, Christian churches or shrines to Elvis Presley. Just a few steps from the Laurel Grove Primitive Baptist Church stands the Guinness Hall of World Records, which exhibits in a display window a Wilson "Chris Evert" tennis racket with the caption, "owned by Elvis' wife, Priscilla during their mariage." Down the street, at Gatlinburg's Wax Museum, the advertisement says "Elvis Still Lives." The Elvis Museum nearby, which claims to possess the "World's Largest Collection of Elvis' Memorabilia," responds to that with a pointed slogan: "No Wax—Just Facts." The big news story of the day was the Memphis trial of Presley's physician, Dr. George Nichopoulos, on charges of overprescribing amphetamines, barbiturates, and sedatives to Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, and himself, among others. It seemed appropriate to visit at least one of the Elvis exhibits. We were taken in by the World of Illusions ("An Incredibly Mystifying Museum"), which advertised "Elvis Sings Again—Laser Illusions." It was a scam. A spotlight illuminated a bust of Presley behind glass, a few other lights came on, and the bust's lips moved slightly, accompanied by a weak and worn tape. Surely Elvis "lives" more vividly in the imaginations of his devotees.

**TOM RICKS**

Tom Ricks is co-author of a forthcoming book on Soviet-American relations.



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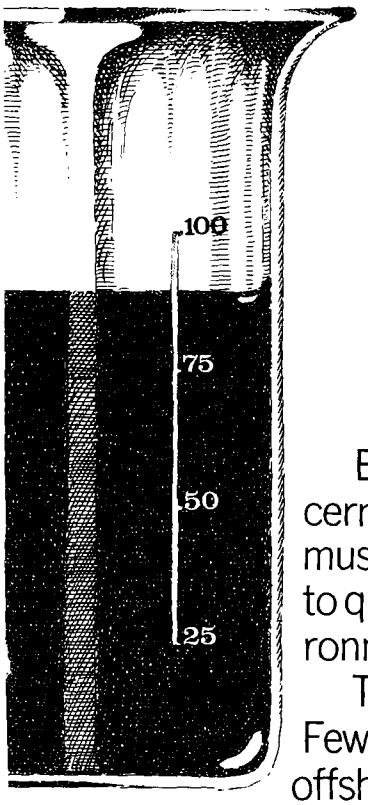


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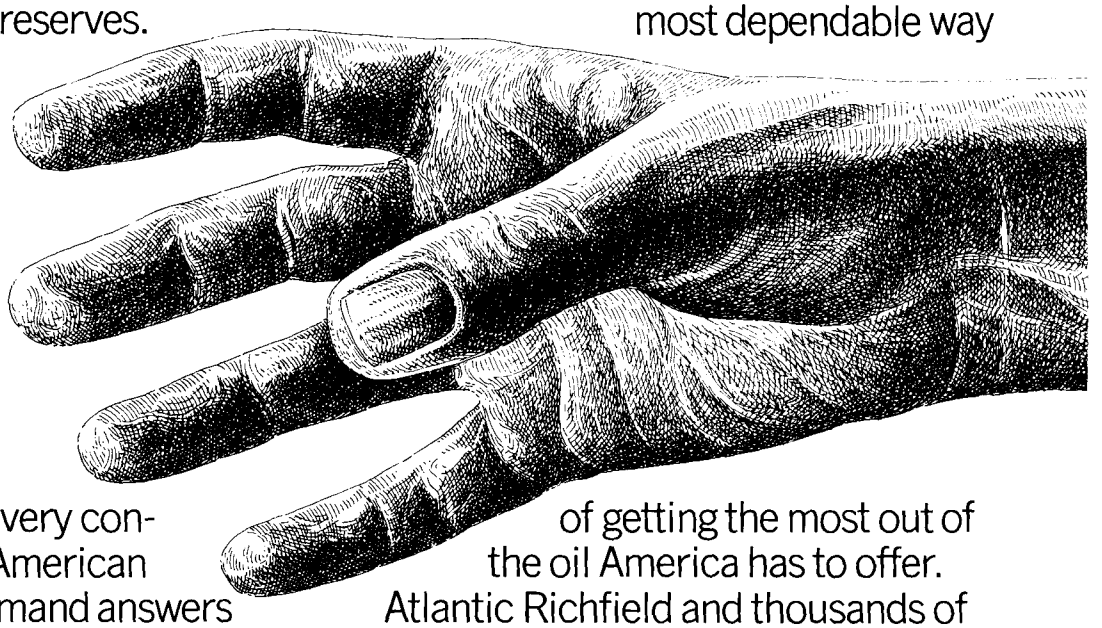

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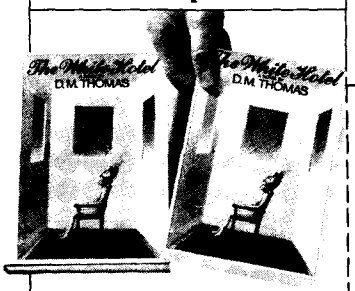


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